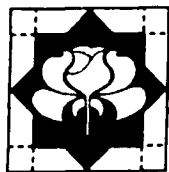


Agriculture Insights



The Lancaster Chamber
of Commerce & Industry

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Old MacDonald has more than a farm now...

Not long ago it was all so simple, Old MacDonald, or a farmer in general, typically had some cows, pigs or chickens and grew a few acres of crops. He rose early in the morning to get his chores done and rarely left the farm. He made a small income from his milk, egg or meat sales, and it was enough to get by. His operation was small, but it was the only size his family could handle comfortably. The bank barn, tobacco shed and green pasture were all that was needed to raise his animals and house his equipment.

However, now we're on the brink of the 21st century, and it's obvious the stereotypical farmer has changed quite a bit in the past several years. The problem, though, lies with the fact that those not involved in agriculture still think the farm they live next to and the food they consume comes from a farm like Old MacDonald's farm.

What challenges can this belief cause for today's modern farmer?

1. **Marketing:** The public is starting to believe that if the product they're consuming was produced on a large farm, it must be dangerous to eat (i.e.: tainted with pesticides, antibiotics or other chemicals). This belief makes it imperative for larger farmers to convey the truth, which is that the food produced on larger farms has a higher quality standard and is made more economically than it had been for Old MacDonald. The growing organic market is an example of how concerned people are about what they are eating, and farmers need to explain to them that efficiency also means first-class quality at a reasonable price.

2. **Ability to function:** The modern farmer benefits from technological advances in farming equipment and machinery, which is much larger, faster and more powerful than in the past. However, problems often arise when a farmer needs to head to the field, for he may be in for an adventure while navigating through unforgiving traffic with his now larger equipment. Here are a few words of advice, though, use plenty of safety signs and lights on your equipment to alert oncoming drivers, and if you have a choice, move your equipment during low traffic hours. Also, since farmers are using fewer, but larger machinery, often they are forced to run it more hours a day in order to pay for it. Unfortunately, neighbors moving into new developments many times are unaware that farmers may run their equipment at odd hours during planting and harvesting times.

3. **Ability to expand:** Today, more people are removed from

farms and are unfamiliar with farm smells and activities. Consequently, farmers often face hurdles when looking to expand, and things such as odor and fly concerns may turn into town meetings in front of planning commissions, causing extra permits and restrictions.

In conclusion, the old saying, "it's not what you know; it's who you know" can be applied to farm-

Lower Crop Insurance Premiums Seen

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Pennsylvania farmers will benefit from an estimated 30-percent premium reduction on their 1999 crop insurance policies under a recently announced federal initiative, according to Agriculture Secretary Samuel E. Hayes Jr. "Pennsylvania farmers are eligible for a one-time premium re-

duction recently announced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture," Hayes said. "However, time is of the essence. The closing date for Pennsylvania farmers to apply for crop insurance sales for spring- and summer-planted crops is March 15."

Hayes said the reduction was made possible from \$2.375 billion appropriated by the Congress to assist farmers in Pennsylvania and nationwide who suffered from crop and economic losses in 1998. He noted that a total of 14 Pennsylvania counties was designated disaster areas because of weather-related damages in 1998, qualifying family farmers for emergency loans through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Those counties designated disaster areas were: Columbia; Cumberland; Dauphin; Juniata; Lancaster; Lebanon; Lycoming; Montour; Northumberland; Perry;

Schuylkill; Snyder; Union; and York.

USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) is responsible for administering and overseeing the premium-reduction initiative and all programs authorized under the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation.

The final percentage of crop insurance premium discount will depend on how many farmers choose to insure or increase their protection and will be announced following sales closing dates.

Additional information is available from the RMA Raleigh Regional Service Office in Raleigh, North Carolina, at (919) 875-4880; by contacting a crop insurance agent; or by visiting a USDA Farm Service Agency Office.

The nearest office can be found in the blue pages of the telephone directory under U.S. Department of Agriculture.

