

# Center For Rural Pa.

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The point being that the consumer doesn't know the conditions under which those birds were produced, but the connotations of the word "Amish" means something to the New York consumer, and that is why that specialty line is able to command a higher price.

According to Wenger, the bottom line is that each in agriculture has a responsibility to become aware of what is demanded by the market, the costs of production, etc., and then decide to make changes to fulfill that demand, or decide to not get involved.

## State Grange

William Steel, master of the the Pennsylvania State Grange, testified next.

The Grange is largely an organization that represents rural interests, much of which is dependent and represented by those involved in agricultural production and processing.

According to Steel, the Pennsylvania State Grange has 30,000 rural members and about half of them live on small single or multiple family run farms.

He also informed the Center representatives — Rep. Miller and Center secretary Joe Dudick — that he was representing the policy of the Grange members, who annually decide policy generated from policies submitted from local Grange members for consideration by the state organization.

Because of the importance of agriculture to rural communities — it serves as the economic engine for many — the Grange position is that protections are needed for rural agriculture.

"There is no question as to

whether or not farmers are being impacted from low commodity prices. Feed grain and hog farmers in Pennsylvania are in a financial crisis.

"Many of them are receiving less for their product now than they have for the last 60 years. Hog prices have plummeted.

"The real questions are: 'Why have the drops occurred?' 'What can we do to help the farmers through this crisis?' and 'What can be done to prevent this same scenario from happening in the future?'" Steel said.

Steel explained that he believed the collapse of the Asian economy, an increase in imports, especially from Canada, and the loss of export markets have compounded the damage to Pennsylvania's rural economies.

He discussed the reactions by the USDA in light of the unforeseen sharp decline in hog producer prices, such as the USDA postponing certain loan repayments for certain farmers; as well as using its authority for debt rescheduling and loan forgiveness to assist needy farmers; bonus buying \$95 million worth of pork products; and USDA Secretary Dan Glickman meeting with retailers to encourage them to feature pork and ensure that retail prices reflect the price received by farmers.

He said that what really needs to be done is to discover a means so as to prevent future unexpected surpluses of domestic product.

"While we hail the efforts of Secretary Glickman, and our own (state) Secretary of Agriculture Sam Hayes, the Grange believes that we must analyze our import and export trade agreements as well as why the markets have plummeted.

"We must also determine how a swift expansion on a particular agricultural industry will effect the market in the future.

"Additionally, consumers must see a drop in their price as the producer price drops.

"Yes, the price has dropped at the retail level, but not nearly to the extent of the drop in farm prices," Steel said.

"I have seen estimates that in-store prices have only dropped 1 percent. If consumers had been given a bigger price cut earlier, perhaps the domestic demand would have increased, thus diverting, at least in part, the current crisis of the hog industry."

He said the USDA should also examine deficiency payments based on the loan rate, as compared to the present market price of a commodity.

"If loan rates are too low, especially in a drought year because yields are taken into consideration for deficiency payments, the farmers will not be sufficiently helped."

Steel said that more investigation and analysis needs to be done into apparent monopolization within agricultural production, supply and processing industries.

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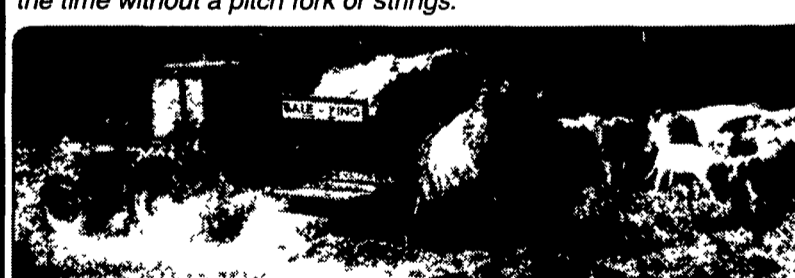
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