

United Ag Services Leaders Discuss Business

SENECA FALLS, N.Y. — 1998 was a period of continuing growth for United Ag Services, according to Robert Nichols, United Ag president, during a recent annual meeting in Seneca Falls, N.Y.

United Ag Services is a federation of dairy cooperatives that provides management, marketing, accounting, administrative reporting, and employee and producer payroll to the member cooperatives.

The federation also makes these services available to other small to medium size businesses both agricultural and non-agricultural. United also provides these services to individual farmers to help them better manage their businesses. Member cooperatives are located in New York and Pennsyl-

vania.

Nichols reported that although growth in memberships and member milk volumes did not quite meet goals, the management and accounting services to other businesses improved. In spite of the current downward trend in the dairy industry, the programs available to members have helped them stay competitive, he said.

Nichols, of Addison, N.Y., is also president of Addison Milk Producers Cooperative, an affiliate of United Ag Services. He and his family maintain a herd of 80 cows and youngstock and also produce maple syrup. The family farm was started by his father several years ago. His father was a former president of Addison Co-op, but has since retired.

James Patsos, CEO of United,

discussed current economic conditions. With a strong national economy predicted to continue with moderate growth this coming year, the market for dairy products should remain strong, he said, adding that the price enjoyed by dairy farmers the past few months will see significant downturns in the coming months.

Overall he said dairy farmers should see prices below 1998, but not at the disastrous level of 1997. Therefore, he said, it becomes increasingly important that dairy farmers enlist the aid of their Congressmen to get the necessary legislation passed which will allow New York and Pennsylvania to join the Northeast Dairy Compact.

The Compact will act as a safe-

ty net for dairy farmers while not appreciably increasing the retail price of milk for the consumer, he said.

Patsos also stated that United was acquiring new, faster computers to assist them in their continued effort to better serve their members and customers. United is Y2K ready, he said.

He also announced a new initiative to help reduce members operating costs through the service's DairyImpact program. DairyImpact is designed to reduce the cost of input, both in feeds and supplies, through a group buying effort. Volume buying allows for discounted prices.

Guest speaker Peter Fredricks, agriculture economist for the Federal Milk Market Administra-

tor, discussed pricing mechanisms under the present Federal Order 2 system. He also gave insight into the new pricing system being developed by the USDA and Secretary Glickman.

The proposed rules are to be implemented by Oct. 1. There is to be a review by Congress and, if approved, producer referendum during this period. Producers, through their cooperative or individually, are to vote on the proposed changes. A negative vote would result in the discontinuance of the federal orders.

Following the annual meeting, the board of directors re-elected Nichols as president; Douglas Stewart, Rome, Pa., vice president; and Leslie Gilbert, Pitcher, N.Y., secretary/treasurer.

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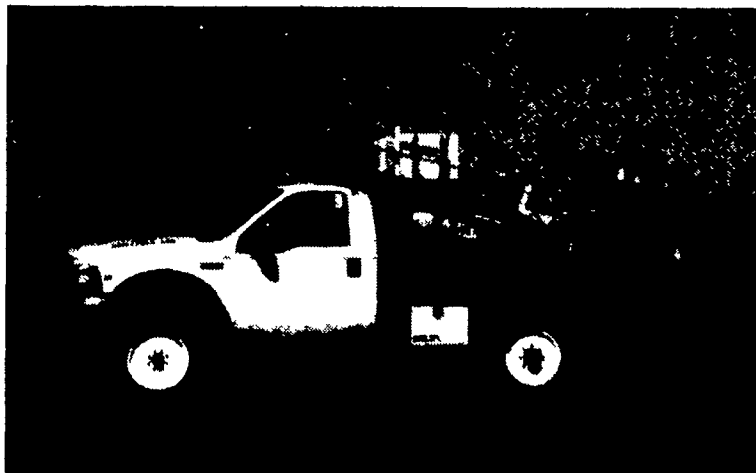
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