

# Food, Faith, Farming Initiative Begins Reconnection Between Consumer, Producer

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LITITZ (Lancaster Co.) — Food, Faith, Farming Initiative recently began what organizers hope will be a new connection between the creator and created, people who produce food and those who eat it.

Joel Satalin, Swoope, Va., gave his point of view on how farmers need to control their cost. "The hardest thing for any of us to do is to get control. The easiest thing is to run down and buy the latest genetics, the newest gadget, or a bag," he cautioned. "Make do with the materials you have."

One of his examples is a animal shelter added to his barn. Using post and lintel construction, family labor, and local trees he improved the structure at a cost of about \$2,500—the commercially built equivalent comes in at about \$20,000.

Greg Bowman, Bally, brought the group together under the conviction that food, faith, and farming need to be connected. Greg used Psalm 104 as an outline of how God provides for us through farming. Bread (carbohydrates) give us energy, oil helps things run smoothly, and wine symbolizes celebration. (You cause the grass to grow for cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth good from the earth, and wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart. Ps. 104:14-15).

In his evening presentation, Satalin illustrated his point with two columns on the paper. In one he listed the keys to the industrial revolution. In the second he contrasted each of those elements with the created order. In the furor of an evangelistic preacher, he begged those present to respect the boundaries inherent in the creation. Industrialized farming, he said, goes against the created order. "God set patterns we should follow. GMO's (genetically modified organisms) such as a chicken with 10 percent genes from a goat, or tomatoes with 10% genes of a soybean go against the Creator. The problem I have with worshipping at the altar of science is that we have reduced life to protons and neutrons—industrial stuff."

Satalin views the 400 families who buy directly from his farm to be the heart of his livelihood. These customers buy salad bar beef, pasteurized poultry, egg mobile eggs, pig-aerator pork, forage-based rabbits, and forestry products. The key to raising these products is controlling capital investment through low-cost hoop house shelter, reducing feed costs by rotational use of grazing land, and selling at retail through direct marketing.

Joel has authored two books about alternative farming management and has gained a national following through his lively talks, writings, and attracting many visitors to the farm near Staunton, Va.

In perhaps the most wide-reaching information brought out at this gathering, Marion Bowlan, Manheim, presented some of the conclusions researched by the USDA National Commission on Small Farms. The most disturbing fact they discovered includes the report that on the average, small farms — with gross receipts between \$50,000 and \$250,000 — had a negative return on equity.

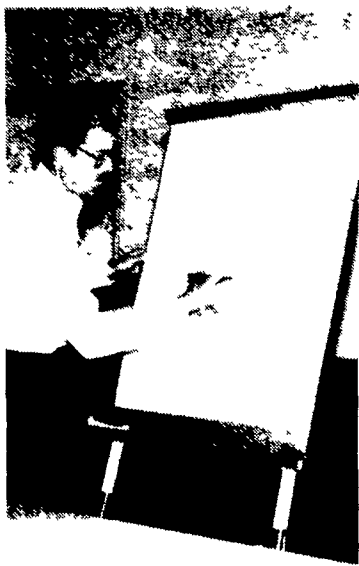
Another sign of pressure reported by Bowlan and the Small Farms Commission is that farm receipts for food expenditures amounted to only 23% in 1996, down from 37% in 1980. Other conclusions and their recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture are published in a 120-page booklet. A 15-minute video also presented a few of their findings. The 30-member group held hearings in six locations, and made 146 recommendations.

Bowlan also represents Pennsylvania Farm Link, a service that connects existing farm owners with people who want to work on farms and, eventually, own them. Farm Link has information about properties whose owners are planning to transition out of the business, and people interested in a farm career.

For more information, call the Maryland Farm Link office at (410) 841-5770.

In addition to the regionally known speakers, representatives of three local producers shared their faith and experiences with the group. Roman Stoltzfoos, Kinzers; Ray and Hope Brubaker, Mifflintown; and Katy Reist, Washington Boro all made a connection between their faith and farming.

Roman, one of three generations in his family at the conference, cautioned the group against persons who come in as experts, but who start out on the wrong premise. They leave out the Creator. "You will come up with the wrong conclusions 100% of the time when you don't start with the right foundation," he proclaimed passionately.



Joel Satalin, Swoope, Va. outlines the differences between "industrial" and "The Creation." The pillars of the industrial revolution included simplification, specialization, routinization, and mechanization. By contrast The Creation is complex, diverse, dynamic and living. Photo by David Hiebert.



Greg Bowman, Bally, consults with Marian Bowlan, Manheim, during one of the informal times at the Food, Faith and Farming Initiative Gathering near Lititz. Photo by David Hiebert.

Ray and Hope Brubaker who produce organically grown strawberries, asparagus and rhubarb, noted their journey from being missionaries to the unsaved peoples, to their present work in stewardship. Ray explained that non-conformity to the world has been a religious conviction expressed in the way he dressed early in his life. Now that same conviction motivates many decisions in his farming practices.

Kate Reist, Simple Gifts Farm, Washington Boro, will begin her eighth season of organic farming this year. She spoke of the community support she received through both her

CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) customers and the church when her husband died of cancer in January 1998. She said that in farming you learn two things: control and stewardship. On control, she said that farmers soon learn that God is in control and that you need to rely on God. Then you learn that stewardship is care of the earth, God's creation.

One of the goals of the FFFI conference was to help people become aware of resources close to home. About a dozen farmers stood in response to a plea from a woman seeking a local grower of pure food. Thirteen producers

registered for the initial network director of food producers, customers and advocates in the Mid-Atlantic region. One participant quoted an article "Sunday News," (published 02/07/99, Lancaster), which reported that 90% of the produce consumed in Lancaster County comes from more than 1,300 miles away.

The conference was brought together by representatives of three groups including Greg Bowman, phone (215) 256-0364, Food Faith and Farming, Franconia; Mennonite Conference; Marian Bowlan, Farm Link, Inc.; and Suse Greenstone, Creation Continues Educational Services.



## Lancaster Society 8

Lancaster Society 18 of Farm Women met at the home of Mae Weaver for a chalk talk by Elva Hurst. Her theme centered on farm memories. As her picture progressed, taped music, and farm yard noises gave voice to various reminders of sunrise and the crowing of the rooster. Special lighting beautifully showed dawn rising. Brighter lights heralded the new

day and gently fading light showed the end of the day.

Devotions by Pat Lueck preceded the roll call with members naming the school attended as a child.

President Martha Stoner dismissed the meeting. Many comments of enjoyment of the afternoon were expressed.

## Berks Society 6

Berks County Society 6 of Farm Women held its March 16th meeting in the home of Beth Glick. Mary Townsley from Hospice was the speaker.

The group will tend the bake stand from noon to 4 p.m. at the Oley Community Pot Pie Dinner, April 11. Final plans for the Spring Rally were discussed. Five members plan to attend. Marian Gehris, Naomie Mest, and Karen Hoffman

will attend Bingo at Berks Heim on April 8. The group voted to give a monetary donation to the outstanding senior in agriculture at Oley Valley High School. Weanan's Restaurant was chosen for the Christmas party in Dec.

The April 20 meeting will be at 7:30 p.m. in the Pleasantville Diner. Members are asked to bring a \$5 gift to celebrate everyone's birthday.

## Lancaster Society 20

Lancaster Farm Women No. 20 met at the Memorial United Methodist Church, Quarryville, on Thursday, April 1, at which time they entertained Societies #15 and #35.

Following the covered dish luncheon, Jean Ressel had the devotions and read from Psalm 1 and a poem. She spoke on the importance of memories and friends. The Lord's Prayer was prayed in unison and the Pledge of Allegiance was used.

The president, Valaria Ferguson, presided at the business meeting and in answer to the roll call the 15 members present responded by naming a war our country has fought in. After introducing themselves the guests also responded. The Sunshine Committee reported two cards had been sent to shut-ins.

For the program Tina Voltz told some very interesting Civil War stories and wore a dress, hat and gloves of that era. The meeting closed with "music" by the Kitchen Band and ended with "Brighten the Corner."

For the May meeting #20 members will be going to Log Cabin Trees and Trim.

