



Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Telling The Farmer's Story

Two large Pennsylvania farm organizations this week, made a creditable attempt to let consumers know how little of their pay checks really go into buying food.

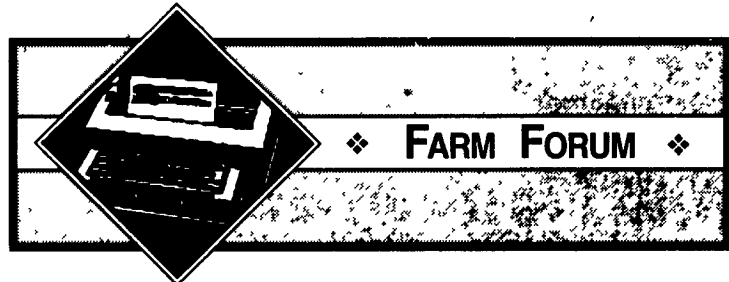
First, at the Pennsylvania Young Farmer Convention in Reading agriculture spokespersons went to a local grocery store on Tuesday, talked to shoppers about food production as it relates to farmers, and took the shopping carts full of items from two shoppers and paid for the food items in the carts, but not the non-food items. You can be sure these shoppers as well as the check-out persons were amazed at how many items in the carts had nothing to do with food. This is an annual event for the state young farmers and a quite worthy effort to draw consumer media attention to the farm situation.

The second event was sponsored by the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau. They proclaimed Wednesday, February 9 as the day consumers have earned enough to buy groceries for the year. It takes the average family just six weeks to make enough money to feed itself for the entire year, according to the state organization.

To mark this "Food Checkout Day," as it is called, county farm bureaus held special events too. For example the Lancaster Farm Bureau collected food for Ronald McDonald House in Hershey. Cereals, dried foods, canned goods, and powdered goods were accepted along with monetary gifts at several local stores and delivered to Ronald McDonald House on Wednesday.

We commend these efforts to show Americans just how cheap their food is. In 1958, it took 22 percent of the average American family's income to pay for food. Now, four decades later, food costs are down to just 10.9 percent. Jane Balmer, Lancaster Farm Bureau president, said consumers pay three times what farmers are paid for eggs and twice what a farmer gets for milk. "People throughout the United States need to take a closer look at the plight of farmers," she said. "The general public does not understand our problem. The shoe factories have gone overseas. Now, they are doing it to agriculture: they're going to import the food."

Hopefully, with efforts like this from good farm organizations, the demise of production agriculture in America will not happen anytime soon.



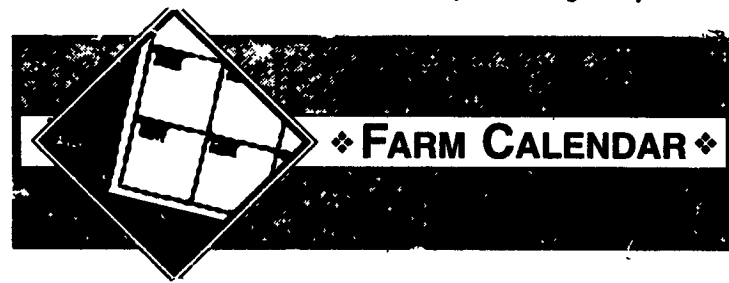
Editor:

According to the Vice-President of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, Carl T. Shaffer of Mifflinville, "things are as bad for dairy farmers in Pennsylvania as they have been in decades." Despite our booming economy, 203 family dairy farmers in Pennsylvania were forced out of business in 1999. That's 2% of all the dairy farmers in the Commonwealth!

One of the most important things Congress can do to help Pennsylvania dairy farmers is to expand the Northeast Dairy Compact. We started this process last year and we need to continue the effort in the new session of Congress that has just begun.

Last year, I worked with many members of Congress from Pennsylvania like Con-

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- Saturday, February 12**
- Beginning Beekeeping Seminar, Leslie N. Firth Learning Center, Mercer, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Farm Toy Show and Sale, York 4-H Center, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Sunday, February 13**
- Food Automation Conference and Expo 2000, Grant Hyatt, Atlanta, Ga., thru Feb. 16.
- Monday, February 14**
- Capitol Turf and Ornamental School, Holiday Inn, Grant-

- ville, 8:15 a.m.-3:05 p.m.
- North American Small Fruit Conference, Primadonna Resort, Primm, Nev., thru Feb. 17.
- Poultry Health and Management Seminar, Kreider's Restaurant, Manheim, noon.
- Tuesday, February 15**
- Mounting A Successful Reproduction Program, Country Village Restaurant, Allensville.



Now Is The Time
By John Schwartz
Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

To Sign Up For Drought Payments

Just a reminder the sign up deadline for both the federal and state drought programs is February 25. The federal program has \$1.2 billion for farmers who suffered losses to 1999 crops due to natural disasters.

Farmers are eligible for compensation for 1999 crop losses directly attributed to adverse weather and related conditions. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has created an emergency drought relief program for farmers who suffered crop loss due to the 1999 drought. The \$60 million state program is in addition to any crop assistance available under the federal program. There is also \$5.6 million available to assist farmers in meeting the requirement to purchase federal crop insurance for crop years 2000 and 2001. To sign up for these programs contact the Farm Service Agency (FSA) office serving your county.

To Look At Five Steps To Improve Yields

Robert Anderson, Lancaster County Extension Agronomy Agent, offers the following five steps to improve yields and profitability.

1. Soil tests are important. They point out nutrients that are missing and need to be added to bolster yields. They also point out where fertilizer costs may be reduced.
2. Select hybrid and varieties based on performance. Use test comparisons that are conducted close to home under conditions and management similar to your own operation.
3. Practice patience. Plant as early as you can but when soil conditions are not suitable, keep the seed in the bag. Avoid going to the field anytime during late winter or early spring

Lancaster County Dairy Day I, Farm and Home Center, Lancaster. Day II is Feb. 29.

Sheep Management Series, York Extension Office, 7 p.m.-9 p.m., also Feb. 22 and 29.

Crops Day, Limestone Firehall, Limestone, 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

Crops Day, Kittaning Township Fire Hall.

Wednesday, February 16
Regional Potato Day, Ebensburg Mini-Mall, Ebensburg.

Lebanon County Crops and Dairy Day, Lebanon Valley Expo Center, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

FSA Production Workshop, Lebanon Valley Ag Center.

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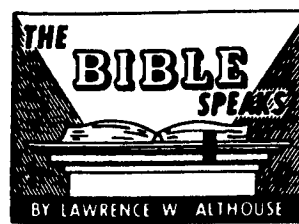
when soil conditions are not favorable. Soil compaction, especially shallow compaction, robs yields

4. Calibrate the planter metering systems. Over applying or under applying of insecticide or fertilizer may affect yields and reduce profits. Even when starter fertilizer is needed, increases in yield usually occur when the minimum amount of fertilizer is applied. Over application

of pesticides is costly and does not improve results. and

5. Check equipment before heading to the field. Late winter maintenance, which replaces those broken and worn out parts on equipment will decrease the amount of down time during soil preparation and planting.

Feather Prof.'s Footnote: "There are many things in life that will catch your eye, but only a few will catch your heart - pursue those."



WATCH!

February 13, 2000

Background Scripture: Matthew 24:1 through 25:13.
Devotional Reading: Matthew 24:36-44.

The Sunday after Christmas I taught our adult Sunday school class on the subject, "Apocalypse: Will There Be A Next Sunday?" Today, as I write these words, it is *next Sunday*, January 3, and despite all the dire predictions, we made it through New Year's Eve and Day without any worldwide cataclysms. (Yes, I realize that, by the time you read this, there may have been some!)

During our study of the apocalyptic element in Christian belief, we studied a variety of relevant biblical texts. We studied premillennialism, postmillennialism and amillennialism. We considered the beliefs of those who believed Christ's Second Coming was his resurrection, those who believe it was in the Pentecostal experience of the Holy Spirit, those who believe that it is what the Christian experiences at death, those who believe his return can be identified with the gradual, evolutionary growth of God's rule on earth and those who believe Christ is yet to come apocalyptically.

To me, it seems that the only unambiguous biblical texts on this subject are those typified by what Jesus says to his disciples—and us—in Matthew 25: "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (25:13). Like the ten maidens awaiting the return of the groom in his parable, we do not know when our Master will return and I believe that he does not want us to know: "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. . . Therefore you must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (24:37,44).

Two Strategies

It would seem that there are two strategies for making sure that Christ does not catch us unprepared. One would be to find some way of determining just when and how he is returning. Just as we prepare for an important day in our lives by marking it on the calendar and calculating what we must accomplish before that date falls, so we could similarly be certain of being ready for Christ's return. The only thing wrong with that strategy is that Jesus says we are not to know

"that day and hour."

That brings us to the second strategy: to be ready for his return at any time.

We are to be ready for him, not at a precise month, day and time, but for all months, days and time. "Therefore you must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect." That is the whole point of the parable of the wise and foolish maidens at the marriage feast and also of the story about the wicked servant who, thinking his master has been delayed in returning, begins to abuse his fellow servants (24:45-51). Please note that the advice of Jesus is not geared to helping them to prognosticate the time, place and manner, but to be 'ready.'

Coming - Ready or Not!

So, what does it mean for us to be 'ready'? There is nothing esoteric or mysterious about the answer to this question, for the technique of being 'ready' is simply to be doing what the Master expects of us. For the wicked servant, being 'ready' would have meant taking care of his responsibilities and his fellow servants just as the master instructed him and expected of him. For the five "foolish" maidens it would have meant simply being prepared for their task by having ample oil with them for their lamps.

The most important question, however, is not what they needed to be doing, but what we need to do to be 'ready' today. If Christ were to return to us tomorrow, what would God expect of each of us? Of course, his expectations would vary with each individual, so the thing you must ask yourself—as I must ask myself—is: what does God want to find me doing when Christ returns? Give some thought to that question and don't dismiss it too quickly or too simply. Rightly understood, it is one of the most important—questions you can ever ask yourself.

With all the reading and thinking I did in preparation for my class, I decided that, as Christ predicted, I don't know when, how and where Christ is returning. Nor does he want me to devote myself to trying to determine those details. What he wants of me is also what he wants of you: "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

Lancaster Farming
Established 1955
Published Every Saturday
Ephrata Review Building
1 E. Main St.
Ephrata, PA 17522
—by—
Lancaster Farming, Inc.
A Steinman Enterprise
William J. Burgess General Manager
Everett R. Newswanger Editor
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