

Agriculture Insights

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Strengthening The Farm Relationship With The Local Municipality

great questions from the audience.

Some other fun attractions for the more than 230 in attendance included a free ride on the Strasburg Railroad, an in depth tour of Cherry-Crest Farm's modern dairy and poultry operation, a corn maze exploration and a barbecue supper. The Lancaster Conservation District provided agricultural-based entertainment for the family during the township officials' seminar.

While this event was only a first step in strengthening the relationship between the ag industry and the local township, it shows promise in continuing communication between the two groups. Through providing opportunities for township officials to learn more about farming, they will become better prepared when faced with questions from the non-farm public. With some of the recently passed regional planning

legislation, now may be the time to establish a regularly scheduled forum for township officials, farmers, ag industry leaders and the general public to meet and discuss current issues and questions.

For more information on this Township Agri-Education event, please send your questions or comments to Brent Landis at The Lancaster Chamber at blandis@lcci.com or 717-397-3531.

The relationship between today's farming community and its local township seems to be far greater in importance than it has ever been in Lancaster County. As a farm operation continues to grow it may require more of an advanced farm or non-traditional farm approach to remain profitable, which may raise some questions, concerns or misunderstandings with the local township officials. This is one of the reasons why The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce & Industry's Agriculture Committee recently held an event for township officials and their families called Agricultural Growth in the New Millennium. The evening provided a fresh look at the changing family farm and how it affects the local municipality.

The Agriculture Committee presented an informative one-hour seminar for township officials on the ag industry in Lancaster County. The first part of the seminar covered a resource list that included the many local, state and federal organizations in the ag industry which are available to assist them when faced with a question or problem. An update on the farming community was given with a look at the past, present and the future

direction that agriculture is headed. Environmentally responsible farm operations were a key part of the evening's discussion, along with their commitment to nutrient management and conservation plans.

The seminar provided the township officials information on advanced and non-traditional farms and their successful fit in a township. It was pointed out that advanced farms are often better managed, more efficient and are more environmentally responsible, but the ag-industry has done a poor job in communicating these benefits to the non-farm community. This has led to some misunderstandings and misperceptions citizens have expressed to their local township when a new or expanding farm operation is presented for approval. The seminar helped to provide township officials with the necessary information needed to help answer these questions. It also reviewed some ways township officials can help keep farming profitable in their townships. The last component of the seminar included a panel discussion with four different township supervisors, which was very informative and led to some

The final rule authorizing implementation of the Dairy Forward Pricing Program has been approved, with a starting date of July 19, 2000. The program will exempt participating handlers regulated under a federal milk order from paying producers and cooperative associations the minimum federal order price(s) for that portion of their non-Class I milk that is under a forward contract. The pilot program will be in effect for milk marketed August 1, 2000 through December 31, 2004.

Operation of Program

The program is a voluntary program that allows dairy farmers and handlers to enter into a forward contract whereby they mutually agree to terms by which the handler buys raw milk and the dairy farmer is paid. The agreed upon payment rate and terms (e.g. payment on milk components or not) may or may not have any relation to the minimum prices of the federal order to which the producer and handler are associated.

By entering into a forward contract under this program, a dairy farmer gives up the right to receive the minimum federal order prices for the amount of their milk under contract. Dairy farmers entering into a forward contract should understand all of the terms of the contract, including how their milk will be priced, the length of the contract, and any charges or deductions that will be made.

If a formula will be used to price a producer's milk, the producer should understand how the formula works and what factors affect its movement. Producers should understand what will happen if they cannot fulfill the terms of the contract. They also should understand what remedies are available if the process defaults on the contract.

Producer Participation

To participate in the program, the handler to which a dairy farmer delivers milk must be willing to offer the producer a forward contract. In addition, the handler must have some

non-Class I used of milk (e.g. butter, powder, cheese, ice cream, etc.) to cover the quantity of milk under forward contract.

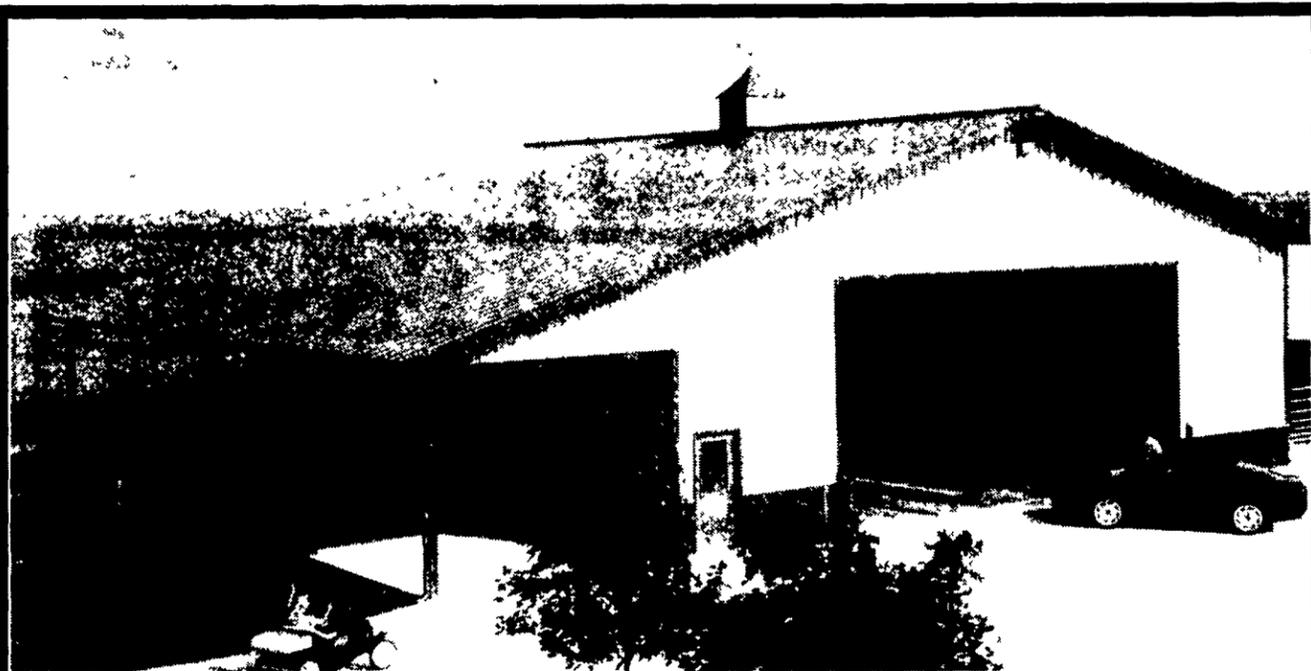
A participating handler must provide a producer with a disclosure statement along with the agreed upon forward contract. Both documents will be forwarded by the handler to the appropriate market administrator office.

Market Administrator Involvement

Market administrators are limited to reviewing completed forward contracts to be certain that they are in compliance with the rules governing the pilot program. Market administrator staff will ensure that the contract is signed by both parties and will make certain that a signed disclosure statement is attached to each contract entered into by a dairy farmer under the pilot program.

Additional information about the program is available from any market administrator office, or can be downloaded from USDA's AMS website at www.ams.usda.gov/dairy.

From "Market Administrator's Bulletin," June 2000



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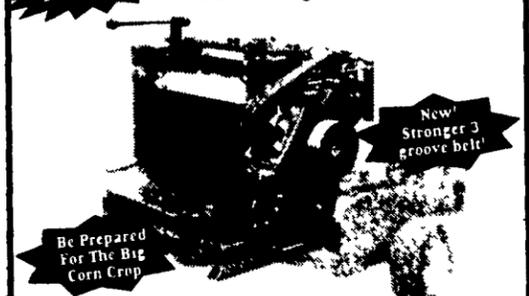
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