

Foods Debate

(Continued from Page A29)

The knowledge of how to control genetic expression would have inestimable use in the health care field, in having the ability to turn off and on the expression of, for example, cancer cells. Backman said that bioengineering is a matter of "using technology right, for the right purposes."

Everything out there has a risk," said Backman. "We're trying to lower the risks and increase the benefits, to keep profitability and maintain the rural community."

Organic farming proved to be a hot button for the audience in attendance. Freese noted that organic farming is more labor-intensive, which would mean the addition of people "back on the land," a boon for sustainable agriculture.

"It's a mistake to impose any one solution on anyone," said Medley. "There is a place for organic agriculture but also current production agriculture meets a lot of needs." The United States produces the safest, most abundant food at a reasonable cost. We must allow for diversity in production practices." Backman noted that corn with a Bt gene helps to lower the amount of sprays needed.

Freese wondered whether the public could trust the companies that said the sprays were safe

before are now touting genetically-engineered crops to reduce spraying, as he noted that chemical and seed companies were one and the same.

"Why is biotechnology developing?" asked Freese. "Is it because of pressure from corporations for profit for stockholders, or seeking what is good?"

"If you want to talk about sustainability, biology must be part of the platform," said Medley.

Clair King, Cochranville producer, attended the meeting and shared his thoughts at the end of the public discussion. To answer Freese, King reported that he no longer has a yield drag in soybeans, which Freese had suggested was characteristic of genetically-altered crops.

"I really appreciate the technology that has kept our farm in farming for three generations," said King, who farms along with his father, son, and two brothers.

The Kings farm 800 acres of potatoes, corn, soybeans, wheat, and barley. King's brothers also run a 60-cow dairy.

"There were years that I sprayed three times on a lot of acreage. Now I spray the entire corn acreage once and spot spray the second time. We basically wait until the weeds are there and spray when we have to. That really has helped us, saving \$20-25 compared to what we once used," he said.

He encouraged organic farmers to "go for it," but added that

Average Farm Feed Costs for Handy Reference

To help farmers across the state to have handy reference of commodity input costs in their feeding operations for DHIA record sheets or to develop livestock feed cost data, here's last week's average costs of various ingredients as compiled from regional reports across the state of Pennsylvania.

Remember, these are averages, so you will need to adjust your figures up or down according to your location and the quality of your crop.

- Corn, No.2y — 1.97 bu., 3.52 cwt.
- Wheat, No.2 — 2.17 bu., 3.62 cwt.
- Barley, No.3 — 1.36 bu., 2.92 cwt.
- Oats, No.2 — 1.31 bu., 4.10 cwt.
- Soybeans, No.1 — 4.24 bu., 7.09 cwt.
- Ear Corn — 58.95 ton, 2.95 cwt.
- Alfalfa Hay — 130.00 ton, 6.5 cwt.
- Mixed Hay — 119.00 ton, 5.95 cwt.
- Timothy Hay — 120.50 ton, 6.03 cwt.

organic producers should not be negative about other ways of production when those methods are tested and safe.

"We eat our own food," said King.

FUTURES MARKETS

(Continued from page A16)

What is really needed to shore up cheese prices is for "natural cheese" to enter the CCC. That is what represents "block cheese." Perhaps the most interesting part of USDA's weekly Dairy Market News report was the following quote: "A few processors were filling in extra line time with process production for offering to CCC. Natural and process continues to be packaged and graded for sale to the CCC."

It is possible that cheese prices strengthened this week as a result of strong fresh cheese movement and imminent sale of natural cheese to the CCC.

In other dairy market news, if you thought the presidential elections were weird, try to figure out what happened in the butter market this week. Grade AA butter prices in Chicago rose \$0.5125 per pound on November 8, 2000. This can be explained by

the laws of supply and demand milk production is up over 3 percent so far this year, cumulative butter production through September is up 45 percent, butter consumption through August is up just 0.4 percent, and butter stocks by the end of September are up 18.7 percent relative to a year ago.

More butter, less consumption, higher stocks—okay, maybe the rise in butter prices had nothing to do with supply and demand! USDA reported that cream supplies are very tight right now and may have contributed to the price rise. But, what is clear is that higher butter prices this time of the month will contribute to a higher Class I mover in December. It will also raise cream prices to processors. Look for butter inventory to move out of the freezer and into the marketplace.

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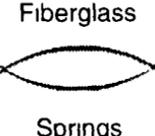
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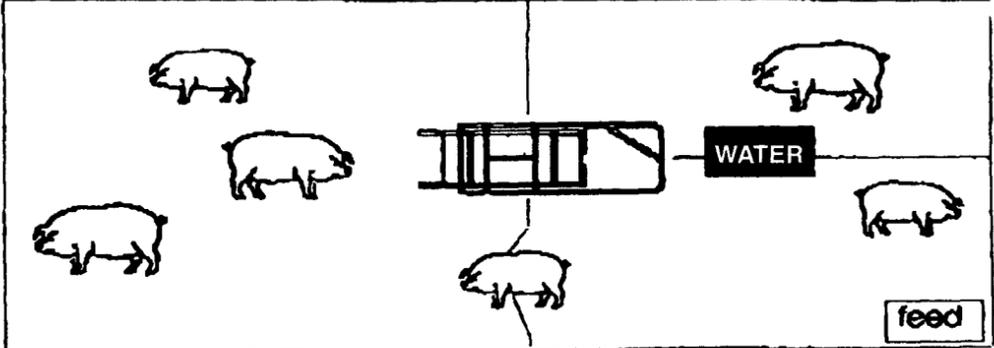


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