

Stakeholder Breakfast Focuses On Dairy Success Stories

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The Zimmermans began farming in 1967. The stanchion pipeline installed a year later worked fine for them. "It seemed like there was nothing easier than that," said David.

A freestall barn was constructed in 1980. In the ensuing years, an inexpensive parlor was finally installed. But the cash flow wasn't there.

Zimmerman, who received about \$1,500 in grant money to help expand the operation through BPAP participation, examined several options to ensure farm viability. In the end, they opted, after 250 cows allowed them to "break even," to expand the herd even further, to about 600 cows. But to have that many more cows required more modern equipment.

Now, there's enough work and the "whole family is starting to come back into" the operation, he noted. The family has special responsibilities: Dale with the "special needs" barn, Sharon with the milking parlor. Another daughter, Joann, 21, works at Paul B. Zimmerman Sons.

Another family, Kevin and Jennie Richael, Sunrise Dairy, Inc., in Stoneboro, spoke about how they have benefited from BPAP.

The \$1,500 grant money "came in handy" when chores so bogged down the operation there was no time for family.

Kevin said, "It was not a real good lifestyle. (Jennie) wasn't happy and I wasn't happy." They relied on an old stanchion barn that just proved to be the "same old grind."

Five years ago, Kevin purchased cows and equipment on the dairy started by his father and uncle. Kevin and a cousin worked on the farm about five years.

Kevin saw how important it was to expand or "do something else," he said.

So they sat down with a financial consultant, Brad Hilty, and looked at options. The BPAP money was brought into the equation. A business plan was drawn up.

With 300 cows, cash flow was possible. The financial aspect of the business leaves Richael feeling "very grateful," he said.

By having a proposal written, the bank was very cooperative. "It looked better to the bank," he said, than simply saying, "here's what we got, see what you can do for us."

Richael emphasized how important it was to develop good working relationships with financial planners and look at the report "every month," he said. Taking 20 minutes a month to look at the "red flags" that sometime show up can prove very beneficial.

At the breakfast, Sam Hayes Jr., state secretary of agriculture, spoke about the milestones achieved. One of them was obtaining official TB-free status for Pennsylvania herds.

Also, the stories about Pennsylvania's involvement in obtaining cattle from Uruguay are not true. Hayes said he wouldn't allow Pennsylvania to be put at risk for potential health problems "on my watch," he said.

Hayes spoke about the new additions to the Farm Show Complex and about the good work of Stakeholders and the state dairy industry.

Ralph Heffner, chair of the Pacesetter Award Committee, presented the first Pacesetter awards at the breakfast.

"We created the award to recognize individuals or organizations who have contributed significantly to a positive image for Pennsylvania's dairy industry," said Heffner. "The prosperity of the industry rests on the vital contributions of people and organization like those we are honoring."



The Business Planning Assistance Program included success stories by a couple of farm families. From left, Kevin and Jennie Richael, Sunrise Dairy, Stoneboro, and Joyce and David Zimmerman, Meadowview Farm, Reinholds. At far right is Joel Rotz, Stakeholders board president.

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Luke Brubaker, of Brubaker Farms in Mount Joy, accepted the honor from Heffner. Brubaker, with his two sons Mike and Tony and families, milk 600 cows in a modern dairy facility designed for cow comfort, employee performance, and environmental stewardship. The farm has a 23,600-pound herd average.

The Brubaker family has been recognized nationally for their environmental stewardship. They employ the latest in dairy production technology and herd health management.

Land O'Lakes, Inc. was recognized with a Pacesetter Award

for its investment in the future of the dairy industry in the state and surrounding region.

In 2000, Land O'Lakes made a major investment in the state dairy industry by expanding its Carlisle butter plant. The \$28 million expansion doubled the plant's capacity, now able to handle 1.6 billion pounds of milk per year. The plant can produce about 530,000 pounds of cream and 270,000 pounds of butter per day. It can process 15 percent of the milk produced in Pennsylvania.

The cooperative has about 5,300 members, more than 2,000 of whom are in Pennsylvania. Land O' Lakes, according to Heffner, actively promotes agriculture in the U.S. and abroad through its foundation, trade mission, and other programs.

The cooperative also supports legislation to create a more

viable future for dairy farmers.

The Pacesetter Award was created to recognize individuals, companies, or organizations who bring positive recognition to the dairy industry, create positive attitudes about the industry among producers and their families, recognize dairy food processing and distribution businesses that maintain and invest in a long-term commitment to the state dairy food industry, and create a more positive recognition for the overall industry.

Stakeholders will recognize up to three recipients throughout the year. Qualified nominations can be submitted anytime to the board.

To receive an application, contact Alan Bair, facilitator, Pennsylvania Dairy Stakeholders, at (717) 948-6328 or nab4@psu.edu.

Seed Council Reviews 'Onerous' Issues At Annual Meeting

ANDY ANDREWS

Lancaster Farming Staff

CENTERVILLE (Lancaster Co.) — Compared to a quarter of a century ago, today's seed industry issues are more "onerous than any issues we have faced in our industry," said a noted trade representative.

Don Wertman, northeast regional vice president of the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA), spoke about the issues confronting a consolidating industry Wednesday morning.

Wertman spoke to about two dozen seed and other agri-industry representatives at the PennAg Industries Association Seed Council annual meeting at the Comfort Inn/Sherwood Knoll Restaurant near Centerville.

The Council meeting focused on several controversial issues, but none was more predominant at the meeting than invasive species.

Wertman, who has spent about 20 years in the seed industry, spoke about the "new devil," he said, called invasive species.

An invasive species is a plant that can spread in an environment and overtake other plants. The amount of communication on this issue alone, according to the ASTA member, is "tremendous."

One type of invasive species is the quackgrass weed. The noxious weed is on practically every

sort of state "weed list."

However, native species groups have convinced state departments of transportation and turnpike officials not to use certain species simply because they were not "native." While it is OK for a farmer to grow tall fescue for whatever reasons, seed suppliers to department of transportation officials using the seed on the nation's roadways look toward weed lists put out by a variety of state organizations.

Virginia, according to Wertman, has an "invasive species" list under way that includes tall fescue. Some governmental agencies put out their own lists that remain unofficial.

Native plant society members believe that areas of this country should be "protected" and use only native plants, what existed in this part of the world in the pre-European colonization days.

Non-native plants on the lists have included Kentucky Bluegrass, timothy, orchardgrass, bromegrass, clovers, crown vetch, birdsfoot trefoil, and others.

Several other environmental organizations such as Greenpeace, the National Conservancy, Sierra Club, and others are lobbying for the return of native species. So plants used to maintain heavily sloped regions, regraded zones, and other nonagricultural areas that traditionally use crown vetch may have to find another

"mix" for cover.

Virginia has a "nasty list," said Wertman. On Dec. 18, he said, ASTA general council will sit with Virginia representatives to review the list. Wertman wants them to be able to prove that those plant species on the list cause economic harm. What risk analysis studies were done, if any?

Many groups are pushing these lists simply to protect tiny ecosystems — little environments deemed worth preserving. But to litigate for one small area, while adversely affecting major economic enterprises, is like "throwing the baby out with the bathwater," said Wertman.

The groups seek to protect "natural areas" of the Northeast. Yet Wertman knows of no "natural area," he said, with a region that has at least 400 years of cultivation and civilization. If such an area exists, "it must be under a big rock somewhere," he said.

President Clinton signed an executive order to establish an Invasive Plant Council. While the government is in the process of setting up a management plan, there is still so much misinformation out there, Wertman noted. There has been no "national list" established.

The issue of invasive species may come down to how willing the industry will be to finance litigation to stop the promulgation of lists such as Virginia's.

Seed growers should be aware



At the first-ever PennAg Industries Seed Council meeting Wednesday were, from left, Fred Mohr, John Baylor, Fred Grau, and Walt Peechatka. Photo by Andy Andrews

of what's going on, according to Wertman. "We have to be diligent or we're going to be legislated out of selling some of these species," he said.

Other "onerous" issues at the forefront include the biotech "front," said Wertman. Many environmentalist groups want a "pushback" on genetically modified organisms, or GMO, crops.

For the industry, seven companies are represented at the state council. That includes about 18 active and 16 associate members.

About 20 companies are represented at ASTA. And industry needs to become more involved.

Because of the Starlink corn issue, in which some seed genetics entered the greater supply of corn from pollen transfers and other methods, the export markets are at "an international crisis," Wertman said. Detection methods have become so refined — down to the parts per million and beyond.

Proposed legislation in New York would have halted GMO research for five years. The five-year moratorium would essentially have "closed up the college at Cornell," he said.

Another issue is intellectual property rights. ASTA is pursu-

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