

# Seed Council Reviews 'Onerous' Issues At Annual Meeting

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ing means to ensure that seed genetic "copyrights" are enforced for manufacturers on overseas markets.

"You know, it's those issues that come up out of nowhere that we need to be prepared for," Wertman said. "It's those issues out of left field that can impact our industry."

Fred Grau, Grasslyn, Inc., in State College, ASTA representative to the Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council (EPPC), said though no official lists exists for PennDOT or the state turnpike commission, Maryland's highway department considers crown vetch and tall fescue invasive plants.

The core group that is "riding the bus," in terms of the invasive species lists, is the "hard ecocleft," said Grau.

They present the need for preservation as a "religious mindset."

The Mid-Atlantic EPPC is a 501C3 charitable organization that anybody can join. ASTA,

headquartered in Washington, D.C., needs industry members to work on ways to ensure the plant species necessary for growers who supply departments of transportation are not on the national list, if it ever becomes established.

Walt Peechatka, executive director of PennAg Industries, noted this was the first Seed Council meeting since the old Pennsylvania Seed Council was dissolved and became part of PennAg last year.

A big issue faced by PennAg is the increasing domination of rural township supervisor boards by those who don't understand agriculture and don't have an ag policy.

PennAg, noted Peechatka, is working with the State Association of Township Supervisors on a policy book for agriculture in townships.

PennAg works to ensure the townships do not violate the Ag Security Act, Right to Farm legislation, and Nutrient Management legislation in place which

preempt township provisions.

Jim Adams, PennAg Industries Legislative Committee member, said the organization is thinking about creating a coalition committee legislative liaison position, not a lobbyist but a person who could help during the legislative process and be active in the ag community.

Dr. Paul Bachman, associate dean of research and graduate education at Penn State, spoke about the huge turnovers that have occurred at the university (90 people in more than three years) to retirement and other reasons. Many have not been replaced.

He also spoke about the invasive species issue. He noted that one researcher found out that for a certain plant, the bluestem, an important forage grass in the western U.S., though the species are similar, one biotype can be different from the next. The Maine bluestem can differ in biotype from the Texas bluestem.

As a result, if native species

are required on state highway projects, a cottage industry would have to be established to supply the seed as part of the request process.

Looking at "ecotypes and biotypes becomes rather daunting to think about," said Bachman.

But researchers at Penn State continue to embrace the values of biotech. In the future, value-added properties can be added to corn to help suppress mastitis in cows, or be provided with antioxidant values (similar to edible corn varieties) for animals, or corn grains with vaccination capabilities.

Penn State is considering changing the name of the Agronomy Department to the Plant and Soils Science Department.

ment. This reflects a national trend in falling enrollments in agronomy departments across the country.

At Penn State, graduation of agronomists has fallen back. "There's no demand (in the industry) for them," Bachman said.

The university recently made a bid for an additional 60 acres of land from an adjoining farm in Landisville, but lost it at auction, Bachman said. A few more acres to continue Penn State research programs at the research center in Landisville are being considered, noted Bachman.

Other topics included at the meeting were mandatory non-binding arbitration, seed quality issues, committee reports, and other Seed Council business matters.

## Ag Conference Jan. 12-13

WYOMISSING (Berks Co.) — Agriculture remains a powerhouse industry in Berks County. Intending to keep that industry

healthy and growing, a coalition of farm and agribusiness leaders have announced a two-day

conference, "Charting the Future of Berks County Agriculture: Farming and Food Processing in the 21st Century," Friday and Saturday, Jan. 12-13.

The conference, developed by the Berks County Board of Commissioners, begins with a dinner Jan. 12, beginning at 6:30 p.m. at the Inn at Reading, Wyomissing. Art Brown, secretary of agriculture for New Jersey, is the keynote speaker.

Conference sessions, all in the Perkins Student Union Building at the Berks-Lehigh Valley College of the Pennsylvania State University, Spring Township, occur Jan. 13. The sessions — centering on topics including the future markets, workforce availability, biotechnology and genetic engineering, land availability and use issues, consumer demographics and market trends, food safety, financial issues, agriculture laws and regulations, processor needs, and the future of agriculture in Pennsylvania — begin at 8 a.m. and continue through 12:30 p.m.

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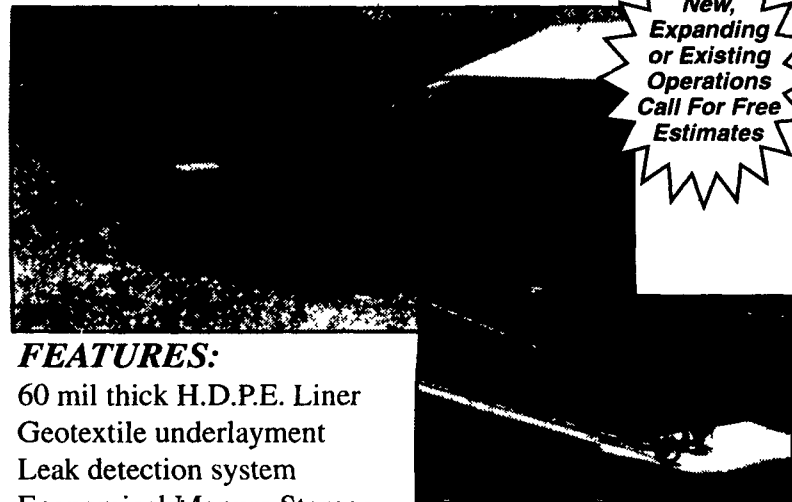
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