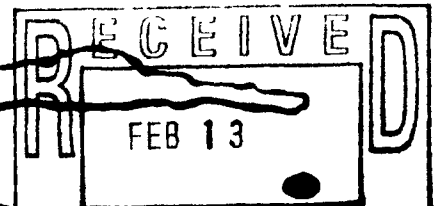


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Ridge's Budget Proposal Called Good For Ag

EVERETT NEWSWANGER
Editor

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.)- The annual Pennsylvania budget unveiled Tuesday by Gov. Tom Ridge included an increase of more than \$4.1 million for programs related to agriculture. Pennsylvania's Ag Secretary Sam Hayes said the budget demonstrated the governor's commitment to Pennsylvania's No. 1 industry.

"In addition to revenue increases throughout several program areas, this will be the fiscal year when a proposed \$72 million will become available to the Department of Agriculture for our major construction projects," Hayes said. "These include a new livestock evaluation center, a new greenhouse, and the upgrade and construction project at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex.

"Funds will continue to flow

into our farmland preservation program making it possible for us to continue our role as the leading state in the nation," Hayes said. "Pennsylvania has preserved more than 1,500 farms and 183,000 acres of farmland, more than any other state in the nation. Pennsylvania has been recognized by the American Farmland Trust as having the best farmland-preservation program in the country."

To continue Pennsylvania's nation-leading pace of farmland preservation and Gov. Ridge's "Growing Greener" initiative, a commitment of \$59.6 million has been recommended for the upcoming fiscal year. "Growing Greener" is Gov. Ridge's commitment to Pennsylvania's environment.

Animal and plant health issues receive increases that include the West Nile virus and the Plum Pox Virus. Issues such

as Johne's Disease and Scrapie also are animal-health initiatives in the proposed budget. The same is true for the Animal Health Commission.

To address concerns facing the dairy industry and the sheep industry, PDA now has \$200,000 available to fight the Johne's Disease and \$35,000 for the Scrapie program.

To assist in PDA's mission to

eradicate the Plum Pox Virus from Pennsylvania, assistance totaling \$717,000 has been proposed to support continuing field and laboratory efforts. Also, the proposed budget includes \$3.1 million for the Plum Pox Indemnification Program for the upcoming year. Eradication and indemnification payments assist fruit growers with orchards that have been stricken

with Plum Pox Virus. The virus attacks stone fruits such as peaches, plums, nectarines and apricots. While the virus devastates the tree's capacity to produce, the fruit can be eaten without any fear whatsoever.

An increase of \$110,000 has been recommended for agriculture research.

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Regulatory Agencies, Noted Growers, Beginning To Focus On 'Agri-tainment'

ANDY ANDREWS

Lancaster Farming Staff

HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) —

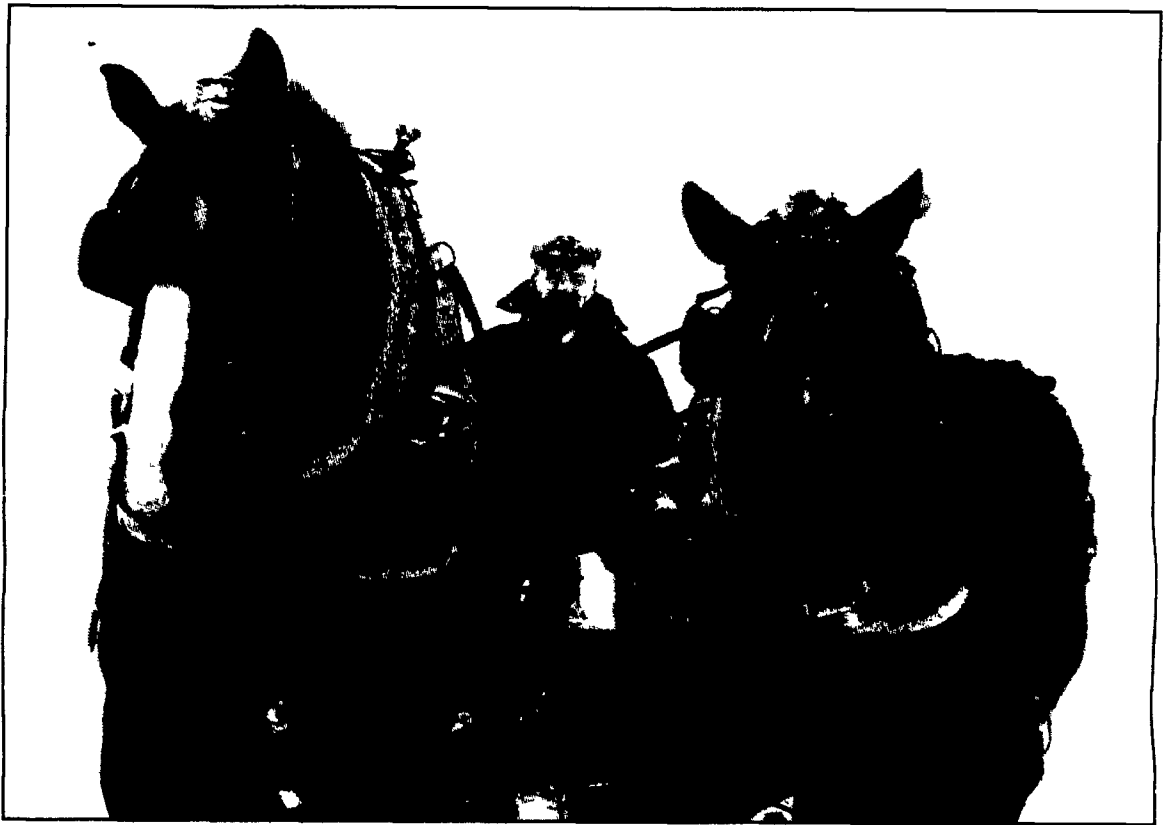
While farmers' markets enjoy a surge in popularity and financial success, owners have realized that issues of farm safety, liability protection, and customer communications are critical.

Ken Wightman, Morristown, N.J., ought to know. Five million people reside within an hour drive of his farmer's market.

"It blows your mind," he told more than 100 growers and agri-industry representatives last week during the Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center.

Wightman Farms includes about 150 acres, including a bakery and cider mill. "You name it, we do it," said Wightman, a third generation farmer whose farm is only about 32

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Fons De Ridder of Belgium delights in driving these horses in a recent Somerset County snow. "American harnesses are the best in the world," he said of his reason for incorporating Somerset countians to prepare harnesses for a 76-horse hitch. Turn to page B6 to read about the unusual quest to break a record listed in the "Guinness Book of World Records." Photo by Gay Brownlee, Somerset County correspondent

Market Outlook, Quality Assurance Topics At Pork Expo

ANDY ANDREWS

Lancaster Farming Staff

NORTH CORNWALL (Lebanon Co.) —

For corn producers, the crop carryover could be a burden on the market.

For those who depend on feed for their hogs, it's another story. Feed "will be cheap for at least another year," said Lou Moore, Penn State ag economist.

About 80 swine producers and

agri-industry representatives listened to Moore's annual market outlook Tuesday at the 23rd Pennsylvania Pork Producers Council (PPPC) Keystone Pork Expo at the Lebanon

Valley Expo Center.

Crop prices will remain reasonable through the rest of the year. "That's good news for the livestock industry," Moore said.

The U.S. has just been through the longest expansion in economic growth in its history, about 10 years. "Some young people don't even know what a recession is," he said.

Consumer price index, or the measure of inflation, stood at 3.4 percent, with food prices expected to increase by a mere 2.3 percent. Unemployment is at 4.2 percent — recognized as full employment, according to Moore.

The biggest good news is the proposed \$1.5 trillion tax cut by the Bush Administration. "The question is not whether we'll see it or not, but how big it's going to be," Moore said.

Bad news has been the falling tech stock market, with NASDAQ down 39 percent from a year ago, Dow Jones is down 6 percent, and Standard and Poor down 10 percent.

For a recession to occur, there would have to be two consecutive quarters, or two three-month periods, of no economic

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Conference Preview, Amish Grazier Survey In Foraging Around

Lancaster Farming includes the winter issue of *Foraging Around*, the newsletter of the Pennsylvania Forage and Grassland Council (PFGC). The issue includes a preview of the upcoming Pennsylvania Grazing and Forage Conference in Grantville and detail about an Amish grazier survey conducted by a Penn State farm management agent. *Foraging Around* also contains a calendar of farm events and other information for the grower and grazier.



Champion Pork Bowl team at the Keystone Pork Expo was the Tulpehocken FFA. From left, Todd Rabenold, coach; Brian Hartman; Cathy Levan; Nate Manbeck; and John Hartman. Photo by Andy Andrews