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Five Sections

Lancaster Farming, Saturday, March 3, 2001

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Grass-Based Systems Can Improve Farm Image, Profit

BY ANDY ANDREWS
Editor

GRANTVILLE (Dauphin Co.) — Grass-based dairy, beef, and sheep farms, by their nature, can not only be profitable, but project a positive, acceptable image to the community, according to a consensus of producers and agri-industry representatives.

During a Wednesday portion of the two-day 2001 Pennsylvania Grazing and Forage Conference at the Grantville Holiday Inn, discussion groups looked toward ways to not only preserve farmland, but also the farmer himself.

According to one Penn State ag easement analyst, in one survey conducted last summer, 25 of the farmer respondents did not know how their land would be used in the next 10 years.

Tim Kelsey, assistant professor of ag economics in the Penn State Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, said the survey, funded by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, Harrisburg, was mailed to 2,000 farmers in the southeast portion of the state. About eight of the top 10 agricultural production counties participated on a variety of farms.

Kelsey said that, in his preliminary report presented Wednesday at the conference, about 600 farmers responded to

the survey, or about 33 percent. The final report will be published in about two weeks.

Answers, according to Kelsey, were astounding: about eight percent of the respondents told Penn State that in 10 years their land, for certain, would be in development or commercial use.

However, sixty-three percent of the respondents believed that the land would be actively farmed. About 2.9 percent believed the land would lie fallow.

A quarter of the respondents believed they had no idea how their farmland would be used in the next 10 years. Would it be headed to development? Kelsey noted, "Probably," he said.

Pennsylvania ranks sixth nationally in the total farmland lost per year, larger than 44 other states. "And we're losing farmland at a faster rate than before," Kelsey said.

Most of the losses came in some of the best ag land in the state, in the east and southeast.

Though Kelsey was careful to point out he wasn't criticizing easement purchase plans, development rights sold to trust, preferred taxing, and the right to farm laws, he believed that though the plans preserved farmland, they didn't preserve the farmer.

"Nothing specific has been developed to help the farm business itself to survive," he said.



Several awards were presented Wednesday evening during the 2001 Pennsylvania Grazing and Forage Conference at the Grantville Holiday Inn. From left, PFGC outgoing president Ed Koncle presents the Conservation Farmer Award to Bob and Kate Boyce, Carlisle. Photo by Andy Andrews, editor

"There's no long-term assistance or guarantee to help the farmer stay in business."

Of all land in farms in the state (about 11,200 square (Turn to Page A28)

Checklists, Consumer Trends, Disease Control At Poultry Day

MICHELLE RANCK
Lancaster Farming Staff
LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — Taking a day off from farming proved profitable for area producers as they were educated on a wide range of topics at Thursday's Poultry Progress Day.

Sponsored by Penn State cooperative extension and the Lancaster County Poultry Association, the event drew a roomful of producers, sponsors, and other industry representatives to the Farm and Home Center.

Risk Assessment
Andy Bradford, secretary of the Lancaster County Poultry Association, chaired the morning session. Dr. Robert Owen,

Hubbard ISA representative, outlined a risk assessment tool for safety from transmissible infectious diseases, parasites, and pests — in a word, biosecurity.

"You need to draw a line in the sand between disease organisms and a healthy flock. Wherever you draw the line is where you take your stand and eliminate risk and prevent disease from entering," he said.

Bradford presented details on a tool which provides an objective approach to help producers manage risk. Goals of the risk assessment tool are to establish a farm ranking based on the risk potentials. Operators reduce risk by lowering the score.

The proactive program in- (Turn to Page A40)

Penn State Economists Evaluate Dairy Fairness Bill

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — A pending dairy bill designed to provide a safety net for dairy farm families would provide increased support when market prices are low, according to a study by two dairy economists from Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

The study also suggests that the bill would provide greater support to small and medium-sized dairy farms.

Kenneth Bailey, associate professor of dairy marketing and policy, and James Dunn, professor of agricultural economics, present these conclusions in "Economic Analysis of

the National Dairy Farmers Fairness Act of 2001," a report released this week.

The National Dairy Farmers Fairness Act of 2001 was proposed by U.S. Senators Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania and Herb Kohl of Wisconsin to create a sliding scale of financial assistance for small and medium-sized dairy operations.

"The bill provides for a supplemental payment to dairy farmers when the national average price of Class III milk — milk used to make cheese — falls below a certain level," Dunn said. "The program essentially provides some price pro-

(Turn to Page A45)

Five-Acre Winners Comprise Corn Talk



ROCKSPRING (Centre Co.) — Corn Talk, the newsletter of the Pennsylvania Master Corn Growers Association (PMCGA), is included in this issue of Lancaster Farming. The issue features the winners of the Five-Acre Corn Club contest, an interview with operators of a regional grain elevator, and other information pertinent to the corn grower. Also included are comments from the PMCGA and advertising messages. PMCGA directors met here at this year's Ag Progress Days. They stand outside the A-Maze-In Corn Maze, a special family feature at Ag Progress. In front, from left, John Yocum, Mike Kuhns, and Elwood Kyper. Back, from left, Greg Roth, Richard Kreider, Ray Byler, Dan Wolf, Tom Murphy, and Guy Wagner. Photo by Andy Andrews, editor