

# Farm Bureau Calls For Legal Amnesty, End to Racial Profiling For Migrant Farm Workers

Glenmont, N.Y. — New Yorkers must recognize and accept the realities of present-day labor economics on the farm, and work to improve them, say officials at New York Farm Bureau.

"Many of our farms could not stay in business without the valuable contributions of migrant workers, most of whom travel regularly from Mexico, Guatemala, and Jamaica," says John Lincoln, president of New York Farm Bureau.

A recent "farmworker advocacy day" at the state capitol was set against a backdrop of Farm Bureau's long history of advocacy for migrant workers, including active lobbying for improved housing, health care, and bi-lingual "whistle-blower" hotlines by which workers can report unsafe or illegal working conditions.

"Full-time residents of the state rarely want to work in New York's relatively short harvest season, which offers only temporary employment," says Lincoln.

"So New York farmers have to compete to attract a seasonal work force by offering a package of incentives that includes improved housing and high farm wages."

### Racial profiling

Most troublesome now for New York's migrant farm workers are racial profiling and zealous pursuit of workers by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), says Julie Suarez, New York Farm Bureau's senior associate director of public policy.

"The INS routinely sets up blockades around grocery stores and laundromats in rural New York and detains only Hispanic-looking customers as they try to leave. This is nothing more than racial profiling. Whether it occurs in New York City or in western New York, it is morally indefensible. It ends up hurting the workers, hurting farmers, and hurting rural New York's economy."

"We need the enforcement dogs called off," says Brandon Mallory, founder and director of Agri-Placement Services, Syracuse, N.Y., and a specialist in placing migrant workers on farms.

Addressing a recent Farm Bureau conference, Mallory estimated that 85 percent of the farm workers in the Finger Lakes region are Hispanic migrants

huge change from a decade ago and that "perhaps half of them are not here legally."

"If New York's farmers are to retain what many have come to see as a vitally important pool of dependable labor, New York needs to get behind a move to legitimize the current work force," added Mallory.

While Farm Bureau supports Mallory's call for "legitima-

tion," says Suarez, "It needs to be pointed out that the typical Farm Bureau-member farmer does not knowingly hire illegal workers."

They arrive with seemingly valid documentation and there is only just so far you can go in checking before you cross the threshold into illegal racial discrimination."

## New York Requires Location On Milk Labels

ALBANY, N.Y. — The New York Assembly recently passed legislation sponsored by Agriculture Committee Chairman Bill Magee requiring the placement of the name of the city, village or hamlet and zip code upon the packages of all milk processed and packaged in the state.

"More and more, consumers are saying that they want to buy locally grown, raised and pro-

cessed agricultural products, so we should be doing everything we can to assist them in that effort," Magee said. "All this legislation does is make it easier for a New York consumer to identify if, in fact, the milk they are purchasing was processed by a New York company."

This legislation came about from a personal experience Magee had while shopping. He picked up a gallon of milk in a grocery store near his home only

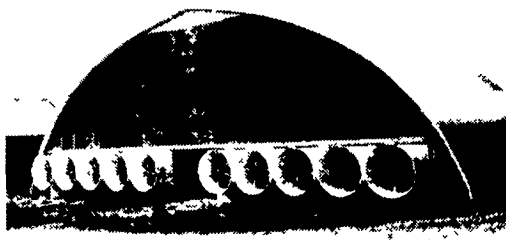
to discover that there was no simple way to tell if the milk had been processed by a New York processor.

Magee noted that he is also working on similar legislation that would require retailers to display the country of origin on all meat and veal products as well as all vegetables and produce with, once again, one of the goals being to raise consumer awareness of where their agricultural products are coming from.

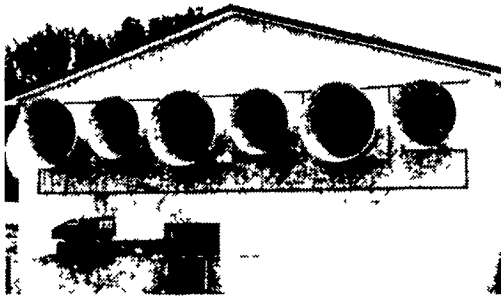
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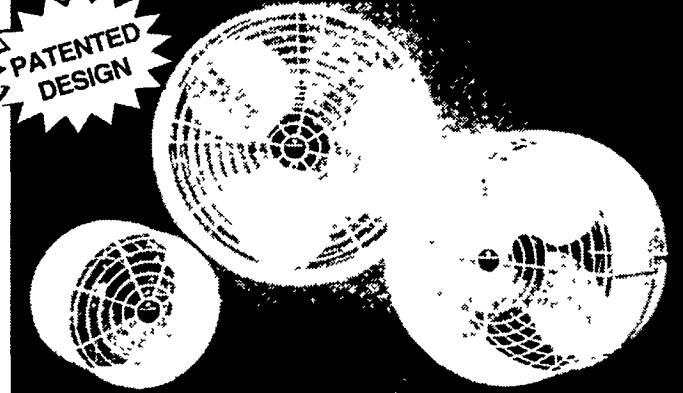
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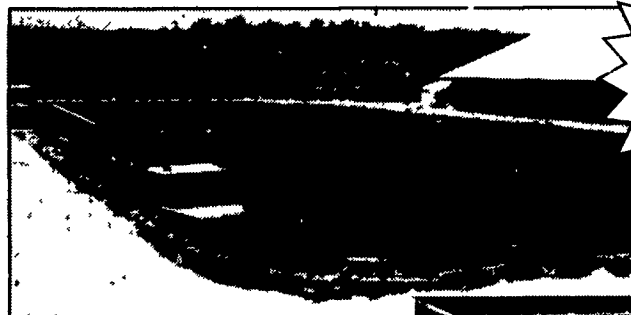
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