



Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Exports Build

Last week USDA issued its "Outlook for U.S. Agricultural Trade" with some positive news.

Projected fiscal 2001 U.S. ag exports are increased to \$53.5 billion, \$500 million above the February forecast and \$2.6 billion over fiscal 2000 (emphasis ours).

Economists might also be the first to rejoice that, in addition, the import forecast is reduced to \$39 billion, \$1 billion less than in February and virtually unchanged from 2000.

These changes boost the expected agricultural export surplus to \$14.5 billion, the largest in three years.

High-value products account for almost all of the growth, including exported tree nuts, soybeans, and an improved outlook for bovine hides and poultry meat. U.S. exports of hides and skins are forecast at \$1.9 billion for 2001, \$400 million higher than the previous forecast and a sharp increase over 2000.

Face it: China is becoming a modern, global player. The people are eating better, dressing better, making more money, and want to share in Western wealth. There's no going back to subsistence living over there: now they want our leather, our Prime cuts, our protein-laden feed.

And the market continues to improve.

Domestically, the big worries again, according to USDA's Ag Outlook for June-July 2001, also published last week, continue to be large supplies of major U.S. field crops. Cheap and available feed in abundance doesn't sit well with cash crop growers, but is great news for feeders. Those large supplies will continue to exert "downward pressure on farm prices," USDA noted, "for the fifth consecutive year."

But USDA forecasts production of red meat and poultry in 2002 to be about 83 billion pounds, up 1 percent from that expected this year, and marginally higher than already record production in 2000.

There are always more mouths to feed, no matter what part of the planet ag commodities are being produced. We are fortunate to be able to meet those needs.



To Harvest Forage Crops At Proper Moisture To Minimize Silage Problems

In order to produce good quality hay crop silage, harvest at the proper moisture.

If the moisture content is above 65 percent, undesirable fermentation occurs. Wet hay crop silage is susceptible to clostridial fermentation. This undesirable fermentation can result in high levels of butyric acid and the conversion of protein to ammonia, resulting in odors.

If the forage is too wet after chopping, ground hay or corn can be added to reduce the moisture content as it is blown into the silo. Harvesting forage that is too wet often results in silage effluents, commonly called "juice."

This leachate seeping from the silo can be a major environmental problem. If the leachate reaches a stream, the low pH and high oxygen demand can cause major problems for fish and other aquatic life.

If a serious leachate problem oc-

curs, Gerald Jones, extension dairy scientist from Virginia Tech, offers these tips to deal with the problem.

The "juice" can be collected and handled with wastewater from the milking center, runoff from the exercise lot, or in a liquid manure system.

The effluent can then be land-applied. Be aware, however, that the effluent contains nitrogen and organic acids that could burn leaf tissue. It is also important to understand that mixing silage effluent with liquid manure increases the production of deadly hydrogen sulfide gas. Therefore, use extra caution when agitating and pumping silage leachate. Never enter any storage tanks or collection sumps that are storing silage effluent.

The best way to prevent silage leachate is to harvest the hay crop forage at the proper moisture content, ideally 55-65 percent moisture for a top-unloading silo and 45-55 percent for a bottom-unloading silo, assuming the silo is airtight.

If the moisture content of the silage drops below 50 percent in a structure that is not airtight, a different set of problems is encountered. Dry silage is difficult to pack, making it hard to exclude air. The silage may heat, destroying part of the protein, or may mold. Excessive heating and the presence of oxygen in a poorly packed silo could lead to a fire.

A short cutting length will help in packing as well as unloading. The length of cut for silage should be 1/2-inch to 3/4-inch. A longer cut provides for more effective fiber in the ration, but as the forage gets drier, the shorter the cut needs to be for good packing. Rapid filling of at least two feet per hour will also help with packing.

Good quality silage is a very important feed source on livestock operations. Protect the quality of your feed supply by monitoring moisture content at harvest time.

To Prevent Sun-Related Illnesses

With the summer heat season upon us, it is important to think about protecting your health during the hot weather. Working outdoors during very hot periods can lead to heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, and heat rash. These problems can be easily prevented with some planning and common sense.

Wear a wide-brimmed hat to keep your head and face cool and protected from the sun. Baseball-style caps are not suitable because they provide little protection. Keep a source of water handy and take drinks every 15 minutes. Take a short break in the shade or a cool place during the hottest part of the day.

Gradually modify your workload to adjust to the heat over a period of 10 or more days. To prevent sunburn and more serious skin disease, wear sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher.

To Consider Refinancing Debt

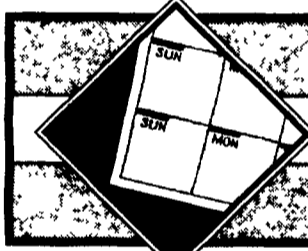
Recent drops in interest rates have lowered rates to some of the lowest charges in the last few years. This would be a good time to check with your financial adviser about refinancing options.

Multiple factors need to be considered besides the interest rate. These include any refinancing charges such as "points," application fees, and closing costs. All these charges need to be considered against the savings to be realized by the lower rates. In some cases, these extra costs may negate any savings. For other situations, the savings could be significant.

Quote of the Week:

"Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you aren't."

— Lady Margaret Thatcher



FARM CALENDAR

- Saturday, June 23**
Penn State Conservation Leadership School, Stone Valley Recreation Area, State College, thru July 7.
Cherry Fair and Earl American Craft Show, Alexander Schaeffer Farm, Schaeffers-town, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., (717) 949-2244.
Pedal To Preserve, Donegal High School, 8 a.m.
SUN Area County Dairy Princess Pageant, Susquehanna Valley Mall, Selinsgrove, 7 p.m.
Beaver County Dairy Princess Pageant, Beaver Valley Mall, Monaco, 7 p.m.
Deer Management Short Course, Governor Mifflin Intermediate School, Shillington, 8 a.m.-3 p.m.


Great Tastes of Pennsylvania Wine and Food Festival, Split Rock Resort, Lake Harmony, Poconos, thru June 24, (610) 927-2505.

Sunday, June 24
Ephrata Area Young Farmers Summer Picnic, Ephrata Park Pavilion Number 1, 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

76th Annual Conference, Association of Township Commissioners, Lancaster Host Resort, thru June 27. (888) 882-1003.

Monday, June 25
Pennsylvania Friends of Agricultural Foundation 9th Annual and Nationwide Insurance Golf Classic, West Course, Country Club of Hershey, 10:30 a.m.

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FARM FORUM

Editor:

We so often don't realize the importance of our public servants until tragedy strikes home.

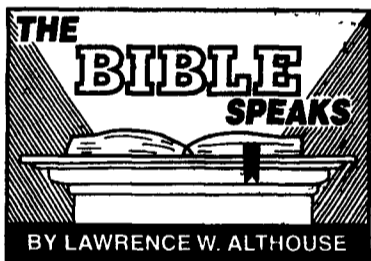
On June 3, we had an electrical fire in one of our barns, and we would like to thank all the fire companies and volunteers who fought this fire. Because of their prompt action and experience, they were able to keep the fire from spreading to the house and

outlying buildings.

So often these people go unrecognized and unappreciated and need to be recognized for their heroic service to our community.

Thank you.

— Ruth E. Stoltzfus, Owner
Ivan "Pip" Ravegum, Farm Manager
Greystone Manor Farms
Talmage, Pa.



A SECOND OPINION

Background Scripture:
1 Kings 22:1-40.
Devotional Reading:
Proverbs 12:13-22.

King Ahab not only didn't like the Prophet Elijah. When Elijah was no longer around to "trouble" him, Ahab found another prophet who disturbed him greatly.

The prophet's name was Micaiah and his only mention in the Bible is to be found in 1 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 18:6-27. He appears only briefly to give his "second opinion" prophecy and then disappears.

Remember that, because of the intransigence of Rehoboam, at his father's death the Kingdom of David and Solomon broke apart with the northern tribes rebelling and forming the kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam and the southern tribes forming the kingdom of Judah under Rehoboam. Of the two, Israel was the larger and stronger.

Ahab later became king of Israel. For some time, Ahab becomes an ally of the Syrians. Then, when Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, comes to visit

him — Ahab's daughter has married Jehoshaphat's son — Ahab seeks to secretly persuade Jehoshaphat to join in trying to wrest back from the Syrians the town of Ramoth-gilead.

Jehoshaphat agrees to help his new in-law, Ahab, but with a stipulation: "Inquire first for the word of the Lord" (22:5). So, Ahab gathers together some 400 prophets recognized in Israel and asks them whether he should or should not go to battle to win back Ramoth-gilead.

The prophets, it seems, are unanimous: "Go up; for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king" (22:6). Sounds encouraging, doesn't it? Ahab gets precisely the prophetic message he wants: Go for it!

400 To 1!

However, despite a score of 400 to 0, Jehoshaphat is not satisfied with their prophecy.

"Is there not another prophet of the Lord to whom we may inquire?" Knowing well that the king's prophets, fearing for their lives, will tell their monarch just what he wants to hear, Jehoshaphat wants a second opinion. He wants to know if there isn't a prophet upon whom they can depend to tell exactly what God has spoken.

Well, yes, there is such a prophet, says King Ahab. "There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the Lord, Micaiah, the son of Imthah; but I hate him for he never prophesies good concerning me, but evil" (v.8). Ahab still has not figured out that the problem is not with the prophet's words, but the king's life. It is not the prophet who spoils Ahab's life, but Ahab himself.

When Micaiah arrives before Ahab, he asks, "Micaiah, shall we go

to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear?" (v.15). Micaiah's reply shocked Ahab as it must shock many readers: "Go up and triumph; the Lord will give it into the hand of the king." Is Micaiah suddenly afraid to speak the truth or is he simply mimicking the false prophets of Israel?

But Ahab doesn't believe this favorable word from Micaiah. How many times, he asks, must he put this question to the prophet before he gets a truthful answer? It seems that he already suspects what God's answer is and insists that Micaiah tell him the truth.

Rejecting The Message

In short, Micaiah tells him that he should not go up against Ramoth-gilead. But now that Micaiah has told him the truth Ahab already suspected, the king is furious with the message and messenger. "Thus says the king, 'Put this fellow in prison, and feed him with scant fare of bread and water, until I come in peace'" (v.27). Micaiah replies: "If you return in peace, the Lord has not spoken to me." What Micaiah prophesied came to pass and Ahab died a humiliating death.

Jehoshaphat asked for a second opinion, a prophecy they could trust, and both he and his kingdom were saved. Ahab agreed to a second opinion, but he didn't like what he heard and so he rejected the message and abused the messenger.

And all that didn't happen nearly so long ago as you might assume.

Lancaster Farming

An Award-Winning Farm Newspaper

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