

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Spend It At The Fair

By now some of you should be receiving the much-anticipated and welcome President Bush tax refund.

We read in the July/August 2001 newsletter, Rural Perspectives, published by the Center For Rural Pennsylvania, that between 1994-2000, real bank deposits declined by \$734 million in rural Pennsylvania.

But many economists claim that rural Pennsylvania population continues to grow.

This trend toward lower bank deposits is frightening. Some economists insist that, essentially, Americans aren't saving any money anymore. We're in a debt economy.

So, if you're not going to save the money, at least spend it wisely to pay off debts. Any extra can go to . . . fairs.

Fair season is under way, with coverage of Shippensburg and Kimberton this week. Next week is Lebanon Fair.

At fairs, many rural organizations provide exhibits and, along with those exhibits, food (and other items). Spending some of that money to help these organizations at the fairs would be a great way to put some of that multibillion-dollar tax money to good use.

Speaking of food, did you know, according to the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS), that the typical urban household, in 1997, spent only slightly more money on food at home (\$1,126) and slightly less on food away from home (\$641) compared to 1998 (\$1,094 at home and \$679 away)?

(That information came by way of the July 2001 ERS Information newsletter.)

Economists have insisted that we spend about half of our income on food away from home. We wonder how many times we spend our "eating outside the home" at the fair?

❖ FARM CALENDAR ❖

Saturday, July 28
 Southwest Regional Holstein Championship Show, Fayette County Fairgrounds, Uniontown, 10 a.m.
 Lebanon Area Fair, North Cornwall, thru Aug. 4.
 Maryland Holstein Association annual picnic, Grantsville Park, Garrett County, Md.
 Sequoia Riders 4-H Club Open Horse Show, Columbia Riding Club Showgrounds.
 Virginia Vineyards Association Equipment Demo and Show, Indian Springs Vineyard, Woodstock, Va., (540) 456-8298.
 York County 4-H Jackpot Show, 4-H Exhibition Center, Bair, noon, (717) 235-3478.
 Cattleman's Field Day 2001, Sinclair Cattle Company, Warfordsburg, Fulton County, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Maryland Ayrshire Field Day, Frederick County Fairgrounds.
 Troy Open Holstein Show, Fairgrounds, 9:30 a.m.
 Botany Summer Course: Tropical Treasures For The Pittsburgh Landscape, Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, Pittsburgh, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
 Ohio Farm Tour, North Union Farmers Market, Cleveland, 8 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Composting Workshop, Barnard S. Orchards, 10 a.m., (610) 696-3500.

Sunday, July 29
 2001 An Engineering Odyssey, ASAE Annual International Meeting, Sacramento, Calif., thru Aug. 1.
 Maryland State Grange picnic, Monty Snooks Park, 2 p.m.
 Ohio Farm Tour, Northridge Organic Farm, Johnstown, Ohio, 2 p.m.

Monday, July 30
 Schuylkill County Fair, thru Aug. 4.
 Clearfield County Fair, thru Aug. 4, (814) 765-4629.
 Goshen Country Fair, Chester County, thru Aug. 4, (610) 430-1555.
 Morrison Cove Dairy Show, thru Aug. 4, (814) 793-4775.
 Potter County Fair, (814) 698-2106.
 Pasture Watering Systems Tour, Kinsley Lane Farm, near Jacobus, 6:30 p.m., (717) 755-2966, ext. 191.
 Floral Greenhouse Seminar, Hendrick's Greenhouses, Lititz, 6:30 p.m.
 USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Seminar, Francis Scott Key Conference Center, Frederick, Md., 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Tuesday, July 31
 Ag Horizons 2001, Holiday Inn, Harrisburg-Hershey.
 Twilight Farm Market Workshop, Weaver's Orchard Farm Market, Morgantown, 7 p.m.
 Pasture Walk, Tioga and Bradford County grazing groups, 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
 Agronomic Products Council of Penn Ag Industries, State Capitol Building, Room 60, 9:30 a.m.
 Irish/New Zealand Pasture Feeding Tour, Don Chamberlain Farm, Mainesburg, 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, August 1
 Manure Application Field Day, Joseph Musser Farm, Shippensburg, (717) 263-9226.
 York County Holstein Show, York Fairgrounds, 10 a.m.

Thursday, August 2
 Vegetable Crops Day, Ohio Ag Research and Development Center's Vegetable Crop

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Now Is The Time
By Leon Ressler
 Lancaster County Extension Director

To List Your Farm Enterprise On AgMap

Penn State has developed AgMap, formerly known as AgNet, to enable consumers, farmers, and businesses to find local producers of various agricultural commodities.

AgMap is a Website with a Web-enabled database linked to a geographic information system. The Land Analysis Laboratory at Penn State will maintain the database. This system will allow you to search for farms and farm products based on how close they are to you. It will also enable potential customers who are looking for products you can provide to locate your operation.

AgMap will allow these consumers to search for agricultural

services based on products, location, and service types. Potential customers will be able to find places off the beaten track that offer locally grown produce, trees, and other products. For instance, if you were looking for a farm where you could pick your own produce, you could visit the AgMap Website, enter your home location, and ask for a search of all strawberry growers within a 20-mile radius.

AgMap will then supply you with a list of all the farms that meet your criteria and a map showing how to get there.

In addition to helping consumers and farmers find each other, AgMap provides a communications network among agricultural businesses in Pennsylvania. This allows producers to contact other producers who offer similar products. This provides several benefits.

For market analysis, businesses can use AgMap to determine locations of competitors and find gaps in services where a new business startup may be successful. In emergency situations such as drought, producers with products for sale will be able to locate other producers who need products. In the case of disease outbreaks, producers will be able to contact other producers to determine how they are dealing with the situation.

Those farm markets that are listed in the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Farm Market directory will be contacted in the near future to see if they wish to be also listed in the AgMap database. Participation is voluntary. Information that will be listed on the Website includes

business name and owner name, address, products, hours of business, Website, e-mail address, and phone number. Once you are entered you will receive a user name and password to allow you to change data and to enter additional data as the database is expanded for each commodity. Anyone who is a farm producer can put his or her information in the database. You do not need to be listed in the PDA directory.

For more information on entering your farm business on AgMap, contact Stewart Bruce at (814)-863-7609.

To Prepare For Drought

Recent dry weather has raised concerns about the condition of crops across the state. As is often the case during dry weather, the rains have been very spotty, so some areas are seriously dry while others are just showing the first signs of stress. Although there is still time for a few rains to dramatically change our situation, it is wise to begin planning to deal with drought.

If you have a livestock operation with large forage needs, you may want to line up potential sources of feed from those who may have some to market. You also should evaluate planting some fall forage crops to supplement your supply. If you are a corn grain producer, it would be wise to explore options for marketing your crop as silage this year.

Quote of the Week:
"No occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the Earth and no culture comparable to that of the garden."
 — Thomas Jefferson

THE BIBLE SPEAKS
 BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE
BEYOND THE BOTTOM LINE

Background Scripture:
 Micah 3; 6:1-8.
Devotional Reading:
 Proverbs 21:2,3.

The bottom line seems to have become the supreme measure of everything in our society today.

Essentially, this is a good approach when we are evaluating something and trying to make a decision. The bottom line is where we come out when we've added and subtracted everything else. It is also axiomatic that the bottom line must prove that whatever it is we are considering must be cost-effective or return the maximum profit.

The problem with this approach is that it becomes the only approach. It is good to calculate the bottom line, to determine whether what we are putting into something will bring appropriate results. The fact is, however, that there are times when we must go beyond the bottom line and do things that are neither profitable nor cost effective.

Some time ago I got a communication from a denominational office informing me that it had been determined that it was no

longer "cost effective" to provide retired ministers with health insurance. I must confess that the letter and its rationale bothered me. During the 40-plus years that I served churches in that conference and paid into the health insurance program, I never heard any of my colleagues complain because they were working for salaries that were not "cost effective" — nor did I. We all knew when we decided for the ministry that salaries would be quite substandard, but we also were convinced that there are things worth more than monetary remuneration.

Neither low salaries or inadequate pensions have changed that conviction.

Different Values

I still believe that, but I am sorry that so much of our society today does not. Value and motivation today are so wholly pegged to monetary value.

With my undergraduate education in finance and commerce, I have always advocated financial responsibility, matching outgo with income and profit with loss.

But I personally know of two churches that would not have been built if we had based our plans solely on our financial prospects. I can think of a lot of worthwhile things we did that would not have been done if we had not taken a leap of faith.

Many people today say that it is not "cost effective" to pursue justice and equity for all. I was troubled when I read in the newspaper today of 700 employees being laid off from their jobs in a firm whose profits have been sliding; yet, at the same time, the board of directors paid an enor-

mous bonus and stock options to their CEO.

So, Micah does not seem out of date: "Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity, who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with wrong. Its heads give judgment for a bribe, its priests teach for hire, its prophets divine for money; yet they lean upon the Lord and say, 'Is not the Lord in the midst of us?'" (3:9-11).

Well, it's all cost-effective, isn't it?

What Pleases God?

"With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before with burnt offerings? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams? . . . Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Lord, just what is the bottom line you want?

Actually, when we come before the Lord, it is a time for going beyond the bottom line, beyond being cost effective. There are times to be a bean counter and there are times when we are called to the unprofitable and supreme cost of the cross.

The bottom line? We already know, don't we? "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (6:8). If you can manage that, you don't have to count the cost.

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