

Agricultural Survey Under Way In Chester County

EXTON (Chester Co.) — Agricultural landowners throughout Chester County have received survey forms from the Chester County Development Council and the Chester County 2020 Trust that will provide valuable information on the business of agriculture in the county and offer insights in ways to promote farming as an economic industry in the county.

"This survey is vital for the future of agriculture in Chester County, one of our most important industries," Gary Smith, executive director of the Chester County Development Council, said. "We're urging everyone who receives this survey to fill it out and return it."

Chester County and many other areas in the region are losing valuable agricultural land to office parks, residential developments and shopping centers. The loss is keenly felt among traditional dairy, hay and livestock farmers as increasing operation costs and falling commodity prices are forcing farmers out of business and off their land.

"Many county residents perceive this change only as a loss of open space and rural vistas," David Davis, president of the Chester County 2020 Trust said, "There is also a significant economic loss. Farming in Chester County is a significant economically valuable industry. We need to understand more about the economics of the county's farming."

The Development Council and 2020 Trust have joined together to complete a comprehensive study of agricultural in Chester County. Funding for the study was provided by the Development Council, the 2020 Trust and Commonwealth money secured by Pennsylvania Senator James Gerlach of Chester County.

The project's goals are to identify public policies and economic policies that can help recognize, measure and promote economically viable agriculture in Chester County. Also, the study should identify ways to build on the land preservation programs of public and private organizations that already exist in the county. Another goal is to identify those public and private agencies, trade organizations and other groups who can champion innovative projects and programs.

In Chester County, more than 36 percent of the county's total acreage is active farming (more than 176,000 acres). There are approximately 1,750 farms, averaging about 101 acres, including 350 commercial dairy farms.

More than 35 percent of the county's farm acreage is in crop production. Because of fertile soil, favorable climate, and advanced farming practices, Chester County ranks #1 in Pennsylvania in crop yield. Chester County also ranks #1 in cash receipts for the sale of agricultural crops and #2 in cash receipts from the sale of livestock and livestock products.

The project has been divided into three phases. The first is the data gathering, the second is drafting policy and the final phase is the public briefings and presentations to create concrete projects and programs that stakeholders in the agriculture community can participate.

Gene Bazan, a consultant from State College, is coordinating the program, which has been endorsed by the Chester-Delaware County Farm Bureau, The Chester County Agriculture Development Council and The Chester County Agriculture Lands Preservation Board. Members of the Agricultural Advisory Board of the project include: Kevin M. Baer, program coordi-

nator, Chester County Agricultural Development Council and Chester County Agricultural Land Preservation Board; Diana C. Hoopes, program assistant, and Chester County Agricultural Development Council and Chester County Agricultural Land Preservation Board; Scott McIntyre of LF Lambert Spawn Com-

pany of Coatesville; Sam Cantrell of Maysie's Farm Conservation Center; David Davis, president of the Chester County 2020 Trust and chair of the Agriculture Study Advisory Board, Peter Hausmann of Terramics Property Company; Joyce Hershey, chair of the Agricultural Development Committee; Dr. Henry Jordan of Claneil Enterprises;

William P. Moore of Walmoore Holsteins, Inc.; Molly Morrison of the Natural Lands Trust; Gary Smith, executive director of the Chester County Development Council; Cheryl Fairbairn, extension agent of the Chester County Cooperative Extension; and Henry Thorne, president and CEO of Downingtown National Bank.

Dairy Groups Ask For Hearing

CLEVELAND, Ohio — Continental Dairy Products, Inc., Dairy Farmers of America, Michigan Milk Producers Association, and Prairie Farms Dairy, Inc. have requested that the USDA hold an emergency public hearing to consider proposals to amend the pool plant and producer milk provisions and the method of calculating partial payments in the Mideast Milk Marketing Order.

Interested parties may obtain a copy of the proposals from the market administrator's Office at the following address: Market Administrator, P.O. Box 30128, Cleveland, OH 44130, Telephone (440) 826-3220.

These proposals have not yet been approved for inclusion in a Notice of Hearing. Before deciding whether a hearing should be conducted to consider amending the Mideast Order, the Department is providing interested parties an opportunities to submit additional proposals.

The proposals should be mailed by Aug. 10 to: Deputy Administrator, USDA/AMS/Dairy Programs, Room 2968-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456.

Each proposal should be accompanied by a brief but comprehensive statement on the need to amend the Mideast Order. The statements will be used in deciding what proposal should be con-

sidered if a hearing to amend the order is to be conducted.

If a hearing is called to consider requests to amend the provisions of the Mideast Order, only those proposals included in the hearing notice will be heard. However, appropriate modifications of the proposals included in the hearing notice may be considered at the hearing.

Actions under the federal milk order program are subject to the "Regulatory Flexibility Act." This Act seeks to ensure that, within the statutory authority of a program, the regulatory and informational requirements are tailored to the size and nature of small businesses. For the purpose of the federal order program, a small business will be considered as one which is independently owned and operated and which is not dominant in its field of operation. Most persons subject to a milk order are considered as a small business. Accordingly, interested persons are invited to submit hearing proposals that would carry out the intent of the "Regulatory Flexibility Act."

If the USDA concludes that a hearing should be conducted, all known interested persons will be mailed a copy of the hearing notice. Anyone who desires to present evidence on proposals set forth in the hearing notice will have an opportunity to do so at the hearing.

Once a hearing notice is issued and until the issuance of a final decision, USDA employees involved in the decisional process may not discuss the merits of a proceeding on an ex parte basis with any persons having an interest in the proceeding. For this purpose, the market administrator and his staff are considered to be involved in the decisional process. Thus, it is suggested that any discussions that you may wish to have with USDA personnel regarding hearing proposals be initiated soon. Procedural matters may be discussed at any time.

If you have any questions concerning the filing of the proposals or desire a copy of the present order, please contact the market administrator's office at (440) 826-3220.

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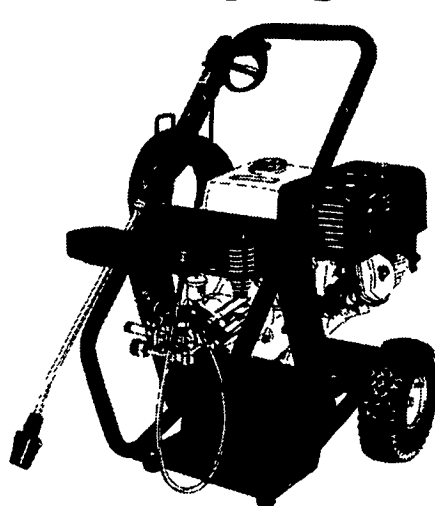
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