

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Grow Wholesale, Sell Retail

News item: *Lancaster County ranks number 3 in the U.S. in direct sales to individuals for human consumption.*

A couple of weeks ago I attended the Mid-Atlantic Direct Marketing Conference (MADMC) and Trade Show at the Holiday Inn, York.

With about 400 in attendance, the seminar rooms were packed — jam-packed, with little or no standing room.

Attendees listened to an array of speakers trying to find ways simply to do this:

Grow or manufacture a product and sell it directly to the consumer.

For too many years, farmers have been "buying resale and selling wholesale," growing a product and hoping for the best price at the auction. But with farm markets, roadside stands, and even Internet retailing, farmers can bypass the "middle person," can absorb all stocking fees or licensing space fees, and can reap the benefits and the profits directly by going right to the consumer.

This is a grand approach. Many people have found it a successful one.

I spoke with Marc Tosiano, state statistician with the Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Service, and found out some interesting facts.

In 1992, according to Tosiano, Lancaster County was ranked number 1 in the country in direct sales. But California counties expanded their operations considerably since then.

By the way, the top counties: San Diego, Calif., number 1, and San Joaquin, Calif., number 2.

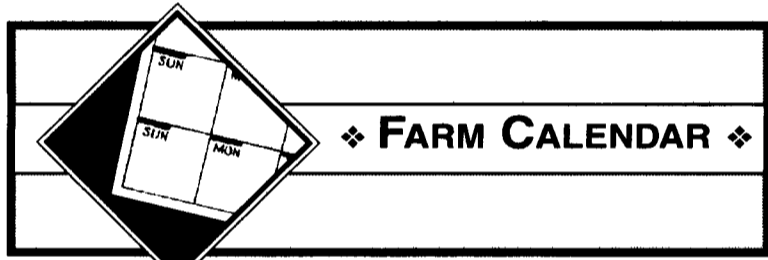
Today, not only is Lancaster County ranked third in the country for those direct sales, but other counties fill in some top spots, some within the top 50. According to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, Chester County ranks 13, Berks 19, York 22, Adams 23, Westmoreland 36, Bucks 40, and Erie 48. Franklin ranks 64, Washington 72, Indiana 78, Schuylkill 84, and Beaver County ranks 92.

As a whole, Pennsylvania ranks second in the country (beaten by, of course, California), with sales of \$48.7 million in direct sales for human consumption. California ranks first at \$179 million.

According to PASS data, as of September 2001, the top six commodities in Pennsylvania for 2000 were milk (\$1.5 billion in sales), cattle and calves (\$393.4 million in sales), mushrooms, Agaricus (white-button variety) (\$331.8 million), nursery and greenhouse (\$311.9 million), eggs (\$287.2 million), and broilers (\$242.6 million).

Lancaster Farming wants to be a part of that growth. As for direct marketing, we contribute with the publication of our *Grower & Marketer* section, included this issue.

For any comments about our special sections, or about how we cover direct marketing events, give me a call here at (717) 721-4425.



❖ FARM CALENDAR ❖

Saturday, March 9

"Grape Expectations," A Viticultural and Enological Symposium, Forge Country Club, Jamesburg, N.J., (609) 758-7311

Garden Wine Conference, York Suburban High School, 8 a.m.-3 p.m., (717) 840-7408.

4-H Livestock Awards Night, Dauphin County Agricultural and Natural Resources Center, Dauphin.

"Using QuickBooks to Manage Your Farm Finances," Westfield Academy and Central School, Westfield, N.Y., 9 a.m.-11:30 a.m., also March 16.

Winning Ways Clinic, Penn State Agricultural Arena, 8 a.m., thru March 10, (814) 865-5491.

Pa. Maple Festival, Meyersdale, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., also March 10 and March 14-17.

Virginia Independent Consumer and Farmers' Association meeting, Piedmont Virginia Community College, Charlottesville, Va.

Bradford County Holstein Club out-of-county tour, 11 a.m., John and Cindi George Farm, New York, (570) 395-3447.

Sunday, March 10

26th Wineries Unlimited, Lancaster Host Resort, thru March 13, (800) 535-5670.

State Legislative Leadership Conference, Holiday Inn, Hershey, thru March 12, (717) 705-9551.

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❖ FARM FORUM ❖

Editor:

The Farm Bill will not prevent a roller coaster ride for dairy farmers.

As a result of the sincere efforts of Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), dairy farmers will finally realize some direct benefits as the result of federal legislation.

Ever since the spring of 1981, when the U.S. Congress passed special legislation which prevented the U.S. secretary of agriculture from adjusting the support price on manufactured milk products, any legislation passed by Congress (except two give-

ways) resulted in continued decreases in the milk support price and/or large assessments levied on dairy farmers.

These reductions in prices coupled with the assessments have cost the average dairy farmer more than \$300,000 since 1981.

Most people now realize that the Senate's version of the proposed Farm Bill, among other things, places a \$16.94 per hundredweight floor under the Class I price (milk used for fluid purposes) for the 12 northeastern

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Now Is
The Time
By Leon Ressler
Lancaster County
Extension Director

To Implement A Drought Emergency Plan

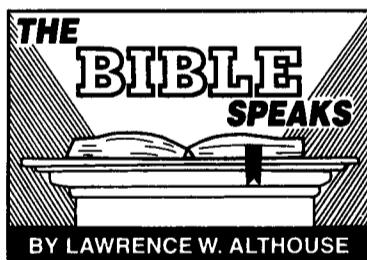
Despite a recent welcome rain, the drought crisis continues to worsen. Many farms have experienced wells going dry or wells failing to supply sufficient water. This problem is compounded by the fact that well drillers are so busy most have a waiting period of two or more weeks before they can drill a new well. If you are depending on wells for supplying water for your livestock, it would be wise to develop a backup supply now before your existing well goes dry.

The first step you should take is to hire a hydrogeologist to assist you in identifying the best places on your farm to locate a well. While this does not guarantee you will get a high-producing well, an experienced hydrogeologist can increase the probability of finding a good supply significantly.

These scientists use a number of different techniques to locate high probability locations for well drilling. One of the techniques is fracture trace mapping. Using old aerial photographs of your property, the consultant looks for hints in the landscape to indicate where underground water bearing fractures may exist. The next step if there are indications of fractures on the images is to go to the field and identify those locations in the field.

If your farm is located in Lancaster County, you have the added tool of using infrared images of the county taken during the drought of 1999. These images can be used to spot these fractures also and are located in the county's Geographic Information System (GIS) department.

To find a hydrogeologist, look in your yellow pages under geology.



APPALLING SIN, AMAZING GRACE

Background Scripture:

Romans 3.

Devotional Reading:

Psalms 33:13-32.

Thomas Carlyle says that the "deadliest sins" are "the consciousness of no sin." When we think we are relatively free from sin, then we are most vulnerable to it. That is why "respectable people" so rarely are aware of their sins. We mistake respectability for righteousness — and they are not the same.

In fact, respectability may become a substitute for righteousness. Respectability is founded upon what others think of us according to various societal standards. For example, I'm sure that most of you my readers are respectable. You probably do not kill, steal, or commit adultery. You are probably not the town drunkards. You hold down decent, respectable jobs and provide reasonably well for your families. But, is that all there is to righteousness?

In one of my parishes I took Holy Communion to an elderly shut-in. When I prayed with her the Prayer of General Confession, she protested, "I don't know why we have to pray

Call those listed there and inquire if they do this consulting and check with several concerning their charges. As with any business contract, ask for references. If you can't find any consultants, call the Lancaster County Extension Office and ask for a list of hydrogeologists at (717) 394-6851. With the high cost of drilling, investing in some professional advice to reduce the risk of drilling a dry hole is a good risk management strategy.

After you have located some potential sites for drilling, I recommend you go ahead and schedule the drilling of a backup well if you don't already have more than one source. If your single well fails and you aren't able to get a new one drilled for several weeks, the consequences could be devastating. After you have drilled the well, you have the option of waiting to install the pump. This could be done quickly if you get into water supply difficulty later.

Whenever you drill a well you should follow good construction techniques to prevent the borehole from becoming a source of groundwater contamination. The first and commonly applied step is to stall steel or PVC casing to bedrock. What is not commonly done but is just as important is to pressure grout the casing. This involves injecting under pressure a mortar mix that includes bentonite clay between the outside of the casing and the soil. This mixture expands as it dries and will seal off the space between the casing and the soil. If this is left unsealed, surface water could pass down along the outside of the casing and contaminate your well. Check with your driller to see if they are equipped to do this and choose one that is prepared to complete this part of the job.

Another important step in preparing for drought is acquiring crop insurance. This year catastrophic coverage (which will pay damages if more than 50 percent of your crop is lost) is free, but you must sign up with a crop insurance agent. Check with your Farm Service Agency office or your local extension office for a list of agents who carry this insurance. You will also be able to buy higher levels of coverage at subsidized rates. You need to act promptly, since the deadline to sign up spring-planted crops is March 15.

To Be Aware Of The Extent Of

Unusual Weather Trends/ The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reports that our nation has just completed the warmest winter on record (November 2001 through January 2002). The January global temperature was the warmest in the 123-year surface record.

Using the world's largest weather database, NOAA scientists calculated conditions for the past three months.

that prayer; what sins can I commit?" At the time, I had no comeback, but I later realized that her conception of sin was limited to the more obvious transgressions. She didn't realize — and I didn't explain to her — that sin can lodge in our hearts even if we cannot move a muscle. Our sins may be unrighteous thoughts and attitudes.

No Exceptions

That was what Paul had discovered. As it puts it in Romans 3:9-12: "... for I have already charged that all men, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin, as it is written: 'None is righteous, no, not one.'" All of us are sinners no matter how respectable the world may view us. We may not lie, cheat, steal, or commit mayhem, but all of us fail to live up to the best that we know.

William Temple, an Anglican theologian, has written: "Some things hurt us; we hope they will not happen again; we call them bad. Some things please us; we hope they will happen again; we call them good. Our standard of value is the way things affect ourselves. So each of us takes his place in the center of his own world. But I am not the center of the world, or the standard of reference between good and bad. I am not, and God is. In other words, from the beginning I put myself in God's place. This is my original sin."

We may be outstandingly respectable, but we still are not free from the temptation to put ourselves in God's place.

If we do not feel that we are subject to sin, it is probably because, as Thomas D. Bernard put it, "Our sense of sin is in proportion to our nearness to God." The closer we get to God, the more we realize our imperfection and imperfectability.

Obsessed With Salvation

Although in my experience many

"Unusual warmth persisted across a large part of the contiguous United States during the past three months, resulting in the warmest November through January since national records began in 1895," said Jay Lawrimore, chief of NOAA's Climate Monitoring Branch at the Asheville NC center.

The preliminary nationally averaged temperature was 39.94 degrees F (4.41 degrees C), which was 4.3 degrees F (2.4 degrees C) above the 1895-2001 long-term mean. The previous record for the same three-month period was established in 1999-2000. Since 1976, the nationally averaged November-January temperature has risen at a rate of 1.2 degrees F (0.7 degrees C) per decade. During the most recent three-month period, much above-average warmth stretched from as far west as Montana and Oklahoma to the East Coast. Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Massachusetts, and Vermont had their warmest November to January, and as many as 18 states from the Plains to the Northeast recorded their second warmest November-January.

In that region, numerous daily high-temperature records were established, and the warmth coincided with below-normal snowfall. A lack of snow cover contributed to short-term drought conditions in the northern Plains. Absence of snow has affected many winter festivals in the northern U.S.

The three-month Residential Energy Demand Temperature Index (November-January) was the lowest on record, reflecting reduced energy demand because of the unusually warm temperatures. This index, which has values from zero to 100, measures year-to-year fluctuations in residential energy demand that result from variations in temperature in the contiguous U.S., especially those that occur in the most heavily populated areas. An index value of 100, the greatest temperature-related energy demand for the November-January period, occurred in 1976-1977, while the past three months registered an index value of zero.

Although precipitation was near normal nationwide from November to January, an area of below-normal precipitation stretched from Florida to Maine, worsening drought conditions along the East Coast. Connecticut and Maine experienced their driest November-January on record and nine other states (New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia, Virginia, and South Carolina) were much drier than normal. At the end of January, moderate to severe drought conditions were widespread from southern Georgia to Maine.

Quote Of The Week:

"Don't find fault. Find a remedy."

— Henry Ford

Christians regard "sin" as an obsolete concept and do not even often mention it, critics of Christianity charge that it is obsessed with sin. But if the gospel is "obsessed" with anything, it is not sin, but salvation. We recognize our sins so that we can get on with salvation — for, as Martin Luther, said, "The recognition of sin is the beginning of salvation."

Grace can only be "amazing" in proportion to our acknowledgment of the awfulness of sin. If we do not take sin seriously enough, neither do we — nor can we — take grace seriously enough. Respectability can be achieved, but salvation cannot. None of us, no matter how righteous, how respectable, can be good enough to earn the saving love of God. That's the earthshaking bad news.

Paul tells the Romans and us that, "since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." (3:23,24). So the love we cannot earn, God always and to everyone offers as an undeserved gift. That is amazing, astounding grace, the universe-shaking good news that frees us from the deadly grasp of our human imperfection.

Lancaster Farming

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—by—

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