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Lancaster Farming

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Lawmakers Reach Farm Bill Agreement Policies Called More Equitable For Northeast

DAVE LEFEVER
Lancaster Farming Staff
WASHINGTON, D.C. — After nearly two months of negotiations, U.S. House and Senate conferees have agreed on a national farm bill in time for most of this year's agricultural production.

The House approved the compromise bill by a vote of 280 to 141 Thursday afternoon and President Bush urged the Senate to vote promptly so he could "sign the bill into law."

The "Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002" mandates agricultural policy for the next six years, with about \$170 billion in funding allocated for the next 10 years — \$73.5 billion above the previous farm program budget baseline.

According to Joel Rotz, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau policy specialist, the new farm bill will bring a greater share of assistance to Pennsylvania's dairy farmers and diversified crop producers than ever before.

"Clearly, this farm bill is more equitable to Pennsylvania farmers than any other farm bill," he said.

A significant boost in conservation funding, a nationwide dairy program, yield and base acreage updates for crops, and lowered payment limits are key provisions of the new bill.

Bill conferees agreed on a total payment limit to farmers of \$360,000 per year, a compromise between the Senate bill's proposed cap of \$275,000 and the House's limit of \$550,000.

Advocates for smaller, divers-

ified family farms strongly back lower payment limits to more fairly distribute aid among the nation's farmers.

For the nation's dairy producers, the bill establishes a new \$1.3 billion program that will provide direct payments when the price of fluid milk in the Northeast Milk Marketing Area falls below \$16.94 per hundredweight.

With this "countercyclical" provision, dairy producers in all regions of the country will receive 45 percent of the difference between \$16.94 and the market price.

These dairy payments will be capped at 2.4 million pounds of milk per year, equivalent to the production of a typical herd of 135 to 140 cows. About 90 percent of the milk produced in Pennsylvania comes from herds that size or smaller, according to Ken Bailey, Penn State dairy economist.

Retroactive to Dec. 1 of 2001, the program could pay out about \$60 million this year to Pennsylvania dairy producers, Rotz said.

The bill also maintains the current \$9.90 per hundredweight milk price support program, covering all types of milk utilization.

In other specifics, the legislation:

- Mandates an additional \$17.1 billion for conservation programs over the next decade, an 80 percent increase. Included are a new \$2 billion Conservation Security Program with incentives for farmers to adopt better envi-

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At Hershey Gardens, with the amusement park's ferris wheel in the background, pink "Salmon Jewel" tulips give way to yellow-and-pink "Blushing Lady" late tulips. Approximately 30,000 tulips color the gardens' landscape in the spring. Read more about Hershey Gardens on page B2. Photo by Michelle Kunjappu

Conference Explores Sensibility Of Smart Growth

ANDY ANDREWS
Editor

MILLERSVILLE (Lancaster Co.) — Smart Growth is the antidote to sprawl, a noted land use expert told more than 180 municipal officials and policymakers Monday evening at Millersville University.

William H. Hudnut III, senior resident fellow of the Urban Land Institute in Washington, D.C., said that only "responsible leadership and the use of the land to enhance the environment" will

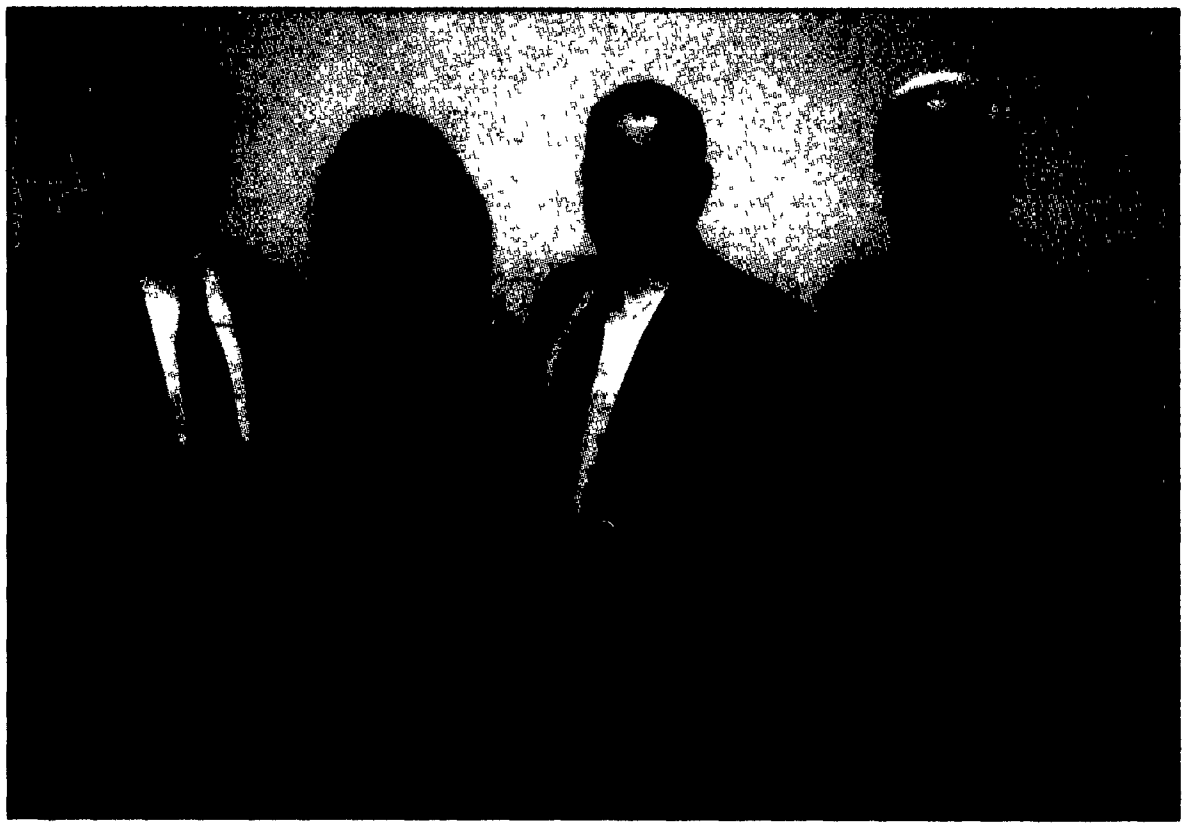
keep us from sprawl. He defined sprawl as "unplanned, low-density development," he said, that spreads farther and farther out from towns and cities.

Hudnut spoke during the Lancaster County Smart Growth Conference at Millersville University.

Population growth is inevitable, according to the land use

specialist. Hudnut, who pointed out the myths generated by those who resist the policies of smart growth, noted there will be 60 million more people in America in 2020 than in the year 2000. Those 60 million people will take up more area than the "size of Texas and California combined."

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HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) — Texas native Linda Davis sang country songs for a crowd of about 1,100 at the PennAg Poultry Council banquet here Monday evening. With Davis, from left, are Dan Heller, Poultry Council chairman; Jim Shirk, Council assistant vice president; and Glenn Esbenshade of Esbenshade Farms/Mills. Photo by Dave Lefever

Farm Show Complex Construction Update




Hon. Samuel E. Hayes Jr.
Pa Secretary of Agriculture

Building For The Future - On Schedule

Editor's note: Written by Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Samuel E. Hayes Jr. exclusively for Lancaster Farming, this new column will provide monthly updates on the exciting new construction under way at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg. Construction is on schedule to be completed for the 2003 Farm Show.

Secretary Hayes has been serving Pennsylvania agriculture since June 1997. A lawmaker and legislative leader, Hayes served in the state House from 1970-1992, including as Majority Leader and House Whip. Secretary Hayes served on active duty with the U.S. Army and is a veteran of the Vietnam War, where he received the Bronze Star.

Secretary Hayes is chair of various organizations, including the state Farmland Preservation Board, Farm Show Commission,

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