

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Good News For Young Farmers, Ranchers

The Farm Bill is turning out to be good news not only for dairy producers, ag preserve leaders, and conservationists, but also for young farmers and ranchers.

According to Kathy Ruhf, project director with the Growing New Farmers Program, "for the first time in USDA history, there is a beginning farmer and rancher development program," she wrote in a memo of May 18. "There are other new provisions targeting new farmers and ranchers, in addition to reforms to existing beginning farmer loan programs."

These are some of the items she highlighted:

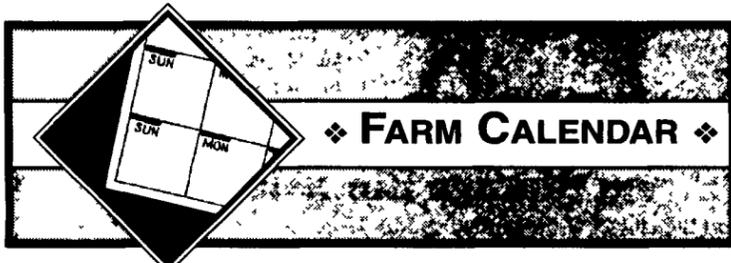
- Conservation Title, Sect. 1244. In essence, when carrying out any conservation programs under the Farm Bill, USDA may provide to beginning farmers and ranchers incentives to participate in the program to enhance long-term environmental stewardship.

- Sect. 2001, in the new Conservation Security Program, a standard cost-share contract for conservation practices on working lands does not exceed 75 percent. In the case of the beginning farmer/rancher, the cost-share can be up to 90 percent. NRCS administers the program. That includes Sect. 2301, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (up to 90 percent cost-share).

- Sect. 7205. This is a little vague, but USDA calls this the "Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems" (IFAFS), an existing competitive grants program to encourage "USDA to solicit and fund research and development of farm tenure, transfer, succession, finance, management, production, and marketing models and strategies that foster new farming and ranching opportunities for beginning farmers and ranchers."

- Section 7405 calls for a Beginning Farmers and Rancher Development Program to "provide training education, outreach and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers or ranchers," a competitive grants program. Educational institutions, agencies, and nongovernmental organizations are eligible.

There are other magnificent provisions for beginning and young farmers/ranchers in the Farm Bill. For more information, contact Ruhf at gnf@umasextension.org.



FARM CALENDAR

Saturday, June 8

Field tour, Tom Sekal's woodland, Northwest Woodland Association, Waterford, (814) 337-5678.

S.W. Pa. Woodland Owners' Walk, Dan Dunmore's tree farm, (724) 852-2663.

Sunday, June 9

International Biotechnological Convention and Exhibition, Metro Toronto Convention Center, Toronto, Canada, thru June 12.

Woodwalk and Picnic at Ken Cogan's in McKean County, North Central Woodland Owners' Association, (717) 484-2239.

Monday, June 10

Poultry meeting, Kreider's Restaurant, Manheim, noon.

Global Positioning Systems and Mapping training, Natural Resources Center, Adams County, thru June 11. Also June 24-25, Franklin County extension office and July 9-10, York County 4-H Center.

4th Annual Mid-Atlantic Regional Dairy Extension In-Service Training, Woodland Inns and Resort, Wilkes-Barre, (814) 863-3913.

Bug Camp for Kids, ASI Bldg., Penn State University Park, thru June 13, (814) 865-4621.

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FARM FORUM

Editor:

In letters to the state House of Representatives last week, Pennsylvania Farmers Union (PFU) voiced its strong opposition to Senate Bill 1413, which would prevent municipalities from regulating factory farm operations.

Senate Bill 1413 will place an extreme hardship on our family farmers. The bill will undermine the basic foundation and support for family agriculture in Pennsylvania.

The bill would keep townships from adopting policies that do not correspond with state law. If a township disregards state law, an aggrieved farmer could collect legal fees from the municipality

for his lawsuit. PFU contends that local officials may better represent local needs than state laws.

Pennsylvania Farmers Union encourages cooperation with local officials. We trust them. We share the same community with them and need their support to prosper. We also owe them our respect not only as neighbors, but as citizens. We, as taxpaying citizens, have the right to collectively determine the environmental, economic, and social direction of our communities.

The bill disregards potential environmental concerns. There are water issues to address, and

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Now Is The Time

By Leon Ressler
Lancaster County Extension Director

To Use Bumble Bees To Pollinate Greenhouse Vegetable Crops

Cathy Thomas, from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Integrated Pest Management Program, suggests greenhouse vegetable growers should consider using bumble bees for pollination.

Proper pollination is needed for optimal fruit set and production. In the past, greenhouse tomato growers have relied on manual pollination which can be very time-consuming. Using bumble bees for pollination is an effective alternative and can completely replace manual pollination.

In addition to saving on labor, bumble bee pollination has many advantages. These advantages include:

- Bumble bees are active at low temperatures — 41 degrees Fahrenheit (F) — and under windy and cloudy conditions; effective in greenhouses, high tunnels, and in open air; and bumble bee pollination results in higher yields and large, high-quality fruit in crops such as tomatoes, peppers, and blueberries.

Bumble bees are shipped to growers in completely maintenance-free hives. The hive has two flight openings. The standard flight opening is used under normal conditions. A tapered tube is attached to the second hole which creates a lock-in system. When this valve is open, the bumble bees can enter, but are unable to get out. This is a convenient option if the hive needs to be removed from the greenhouse. The hives are supplied with sugar water for the total life expectancy of the hive, since crops such as tomato have blossoms that do not produce nectar.

Tomato blossoms require slight movement for sufficient pollen from the stamens to fall onto the stigma of

the flower. Bumble bees cause movement by hanging upside down on the flower, fastening their jaws onto the staminal tube, and then setting the flower into vibration by activating their flight muscles. This is called "buzz pollination." These jaw marks will soon appear as a brown discoloration on the blossom, assuring the grower that flower has been visited and "set."

Bumble bees are most active in the morning and in the afternoon at temperatures between 50 and 86 degrees F. They function best at temperatures between 59 and 77 degrees F. Bumble bees can be used to pollinate other crops such as peppers, cherry tomatoes, eggplants, and blueberries.

Thomas suggests one should consider the following factors when using bumble bee pollination. First, use pesticides selectively, since many of the traditional classes of insecticides will have a negative impact on the hive. Contact a bumble bees distributor for specific information about persistence and compatibility of specific compounds. Systemic pesticides (pesticides that are absorbed through the roots) may damage the bumble bee population. Bumble bees perform best when used with natural enemies to control pests. Growers should remove blue sticky cards from the greenhouse since they may attract the bumble bees. It is important to keep ants away from the hive. Finally, Thomas warns growers not to put ornamental hanging baskets treated with systemic insecticides in houses with bumble bees.

Two informative Websites on this topic are <http://www.koppert.nl> Koppert Biologicals, (734) 641-3763, Michigan and <http://www.biobest.be> Biobest Biologicals, (303) 661-9546, Colorado.

For more information, contact Cathy Thomas, Integrated Pest Management Program, Bureau of Plant Industry/Rm. 100, 2301 N. Cameron Street Harrisburg, PA 17110, (717)-705-5857, e-mail c-cthomas@state.pa.us or ct3@psu.edu.

To Learn About Turfgrass And Agricultural Equipment (TAE) Service Technician Certificate Program

A program offered by Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences will help meet the needs of the turfgrass and agricultural equipment industry for highly qualified service technicians to keep equipment in top condition. The Turfgrass and Agricultural Equipment (TAE) Service Technician Certificate program will create technicians for this service area.

"The turfgrass and agricultural equipment industries report shortages of qualified technicians wanting and able to work in the industry," said Doug Schaufler, instructor in the department of agricultural and biological engineering. "The Engine and Equipment Council estimates a shortage of 30,000 qualified technicians." Developed with input from industry representatives, this two-year certificate pro-

gram will be offered at the University Park campus over a two-year sequence of four eight-week sessions. The first session starts in October 2002.

"Offering the TAE program in four eight-week sessions each year allows individuals to work in the turfgrass and agricultural equipment industry when not at school," said Dr. James Hilton, associate professor of agricultural engineering and education. Sessions will be offered back-to-back. The fall session runs from October through December, and the spring session runs from January through March 2003.

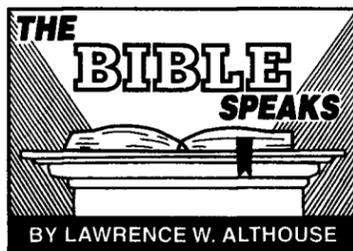
The first year curriculum includes mathematics for turfgrass and agricultural service technicians, hydraulic applications, engine technology, electrical systems, computer basics and applications, safe equipment transport and shop practice, communications and public relations, power transmission applications, turfgrass and agricultural equipment, and business concepts.

The following subjects will be covered during the second year: electronic applications, electrohydraulics and hydrostatics, agronomy or turfgrass principles, machinery management for turfgrass, written communications and agriculture business applications, inventory management, agricultural equipment operation, shop management, turfgrass and agricultural equipment operation, irrigation systems and water management, power units, traction and weight transfer and diagnostics, repair and maintenance. Optional workshops may include welding and metal working, plastics use and repair, painting, inventory control, safety management and other mechanical, business, and management concepts.

The curriculum covers more than just engines, hydraulics and electrical systems, according to Hilton. It also includes equipment operation and adjustment, plus computer, business, and management skills to allow service technicians to increase their contribution and become an integrated part of a successful business. "The TAE program format caters to those interested in improving their careers and furthering their education, but are not interested in a conventional two- or four-year college degree," said Schaufler. "Classes meet eight weeks in the fall and eight weeks in the spring for two years, allowing students to participate in on-the-job experience for the majority of the year."

For more information, contact Dr. James W. Hilton by mail at The Pennsylvania State University, 232 Agricultural Engineering Building, University Park, PA 16802; by phone at (814) 863-1817; or by e-mail at jwh2@psu.edu. More can be learned about the TAE program by visiting the Website at <http://www.age.psu.edu/TAE>.

Quote Of The Week:
"Leaders must be close enough to relate to others, but far enough ahead to motivate them."
— John Maxwell



OF HOPE AND HELP

Background Scripture: Psalms 42-43.
Devotional Reading: Psalms 43.

Let's understand this from the beginning: the author of Psalm 42 is not just having a "bad hair day." In fact, he is not just having a bad day. He is, as we sometimes are, a person in chronic, deep distress.

So he uses powerful and illustrative words to tell us what is going on with him: "As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (42:1,2).

This is not the thirst I feel because I have been without anything to drink for the past several hours. This is a longing thirst that one experiences in long hours in the desert. Prof. Samuel Terrien renders this as "So panteth my soul after thee, O God." There is a sense of deep desperation over one of the most basic human needs. But instead of water, the Psalmist acknowledges that it is actually God that he needs and seeks.

The Bottomless Void
The Psalmist recognizes what so many of us find it almost impossible to

discern: God is our deepest, most vital need. Very often people who overlook themselves with food, alcohol, drugs, sex, status, or material wealth are searching vainly for something to fill that seemingly bottomless void inside us.

We hunger or thirst but nothing ever seems to satisfy that deep longing. Blessed is the person who can discover: "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God."

Note that the Psalmist is very specific. He seeks not the God of ideas, rituals or reason, but the living God, the God who can be experienced when ideas, rituals, and reason fail. He cries: "When shall I come and behold the face of God?" He wants the real God, not someone's speculations. He wants the God who can reassure him in the face of those who taunt him: "Where is your God?"

What is the "mess" in which the Psalmist finds himself? Scholars speculate that this is a man who, for some reason or other, is in exile far away from Jerusalem. The God he once experienced in the Holy City he now calls upon "from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar" (43:6).

We don't know where Mount Mizar is, but Hermon is the snow-capped mountain far to the north of Jerusalem. Scholars also discern that this man probably was a participant, perhaps even a leader, in worship in Jerusalem's temple. (See 43:4). They also say that he is physically ill as well as homesick.

What's The Matter?

Yet, at that point when it seems he can bear it no longer, he begins to reason with himself: "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?" (43:5). I can so easily identify with him here because there are times when I ask myself, "What's the matter with you? Why are you thinking this way?"

Often, it is then that I recognize that it is the voice of God challenging me — as I am certain you have.

Because the Psalmist is willing to pursue this question, he at last finds an answer: "Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God."

There are times when life crowds in upon us and we realize the impotence all those things — society, technology, theology, ourselves — in which we hoped, and are faced with surrendering ourselves either to despair or to God. I inevitably choose God, because although I have not yet beheld his "face," I have known him in other times and found him my only hope.

Thus, while surrounded by nothing but despairing circumstances, we can lay claim on a future that looks back on the help that God will give us. Faith is living on the promise of God's grace that as yet we have not seen fulfilled, but know in our hearts we will see. We need to know that every landscape of our existence is alive with the presence of God.

The intrepid explorer, Sir John Franklin, was shown maps of areas not yet explored. Someone had written at various places on the map, "Here be dragons" and "Here be demons." But Franklin wrote at each place: "Here be God."

Our hope is not that the dragons and demons are not real, but that God is even more real.

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