

Penn State Cooperative Extension Capitol Region Dairy Team

SALUTING AMERICA'S FOOD INDUSTRY

Del Voight
Extension Agronomy Agent
Capitol Region

This article will discuss a small portion of the food production system. Most of the information was obtained through the Agriculture Ambassador program that I attended in Jackson, Miss.

We as Americans have the safest, most reliable food production system in the world.

Consider this:

The average life expectancy in the U.S. today is 76.1 years, compared with 70 years in 1960, 60 years in 1930, and 47 years in 1900. I am in my 30s and consider myself young, but I pause to think that back in the 1900s I would have been considered old.

Today, U.S. citizens have access to a wide variety of nourishing fruits, vegetables, grains, meats, poultry, and dairy products. The quality, selection, and low cost make our food supply the envy of the rest of the world.

Again, our modern agricultural practices allow a very small percentage of our population to produce more agricultural products than any other country. Take a look at these statistics on percentages of income spent on food as opposed to percentages of population in agriculture. We spend 11 percent of our income on food while only 2 percent of our population is involved with farming. If you lived in France, 28 percent of your income would go to food bills and 14 percent of the population would be involved with farming.

Consider living in India, where 64 percent of your income would go to food and 68 percent of the population are farming. Chances are, you would be farming and working to eat.

Here's a different perspective. This one may hit a little closer to home. Imagine you went to the grocery store to pick up a few things, such as a gallon of milk, a dozen eggs, five pounds of sugar, one pound of cheddar cheese, one pound of sirloin steak, and a two-pound bag of apples. How much would you expect to pay? On average, in the U.S. it would cost about \$18.79.

Can anyone guess what the same groceries would cost in Spain? How about China? In Spain that same bag would cost \$28.14 and in China that bag would cost \$74.23.

Like any other industry, agriculture has and must continue to evolve with technology. Farm output has more than doubled since the year 1940. Agriculture has advanced more rapidly in the past 50 years than in the past 12,000 years combined.

Consider the magnitude of the following statistics:

Production of food has increased by 230 percent since 1940 and doubled since 1960 — using the same amount of cropland. In 1960 one farmer fed 25 people.

Each of today's U.S. farmers feeds 129 people. In 1950, U.S. farmers produced 50 bushels of corn per acre — today's farmer will produce 127.1 bushels of corn per acre. Today's Americans would spend about \$195 billion more per year on food if we were to begin using technology of the 1950s again.

The use of modern agriculture practices are allowing farmers to produce more food and food at lower cost for consumers in America and around the world. Each day, approximately \$6 million in U.S. agricultural products such as grains, oilseeds, cotton, meats, vegetables, and snack foods will be consigned to export to foreign markets.

The U.S. plays a huge role in providing food to foreign markets. We provide 19 percent of the world's cotton, 49 percent of the world's soybeans, 12 percent of the world's wheat, and 36 percent of the world's corn. In addition, the \$100 billion in annual exports create jobs for about 1 million workers throughout the U.S.

It is imperative that the U.S. continues the current level of food production in order to sustain our foreign export levels. As the population of the world increases and the amount of available farm land decreases, many are questioning if the U.S. can maintain food production levels to keep our food costs down and our exports strong.

U.S. agriculture will face many challenges in the next millennium. World population will peak at 8.5 billion people in 2035 from today's 6 billion and 1980's 4.3 billion. The world must produce as much food in the next 40-80 years as in the past 12,000 years, and on less land than ever before. Only 7 percent of Earth's surface is available for agricultural production, and this decreases daily.

Agriculture practices have changed dramatically since 1900. Modern technology has made it possible for U.S. farmers to produce much higher yields on less land. As a result, American families enjoy the cheapest, most abundant food supply in the world.

Delicious, nutritious, high-quality food is available to us at a very low cost. Therefore, today's Americans are eating better and living longer than ever before.

Modern agriculture practices are the cornerstone of U.S. food production. These practices will enable food production to thrive in the face of increasing world population and decreasing farmland. But this can only happen if we concentrate on agricultural research and the continued development of agricultural science and technology. Just like any other industry, agriculture must continue to evolve with technology to meet the ever-increasing demand for food.

David Bittner Chosen State FFA 2002-2003 President

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — David Bittner, Berlin (Somerset County), was chosen president of the Pennsylvania FFA for 2002-2003 during the state convention last week at Penn State University. He is a member of the Brothers Valley FFA.

Selected state vice president was Tim Leshner, a member of the Mahantango FFA at Line Mountain High School in Herndon (Northumberland County). He lives in Pitman (Schuylkill County).

The four regional 2002-2003 vice presidents chosen are: eastern — Courtney Miller, McClure (Snyder County), West Snyder

FFA; north central — John Lauver, Mt. Pleasant Mills (Snyder County), Middleburg FFA; south central — Mary Strasbaugh, Mechanicsburg (Cumberland County), Cumberland Valley FFA; and western — Drew Cowden, Hickory (Washington County), H. G. Parkinson FFA, Fort Cherry High School.

Shippensburg FFA member Emily Grove, who resides in Shippensburg (Cumberland County), was named secretary of the state FFA. Also from Shippensburg is the new state FFA treasurer, Mark Fulton, who is a member of the Big Spring FFA.

Julie Flinchbaugh, York (York County), was chosen reporter on the state FFA officer team. She is

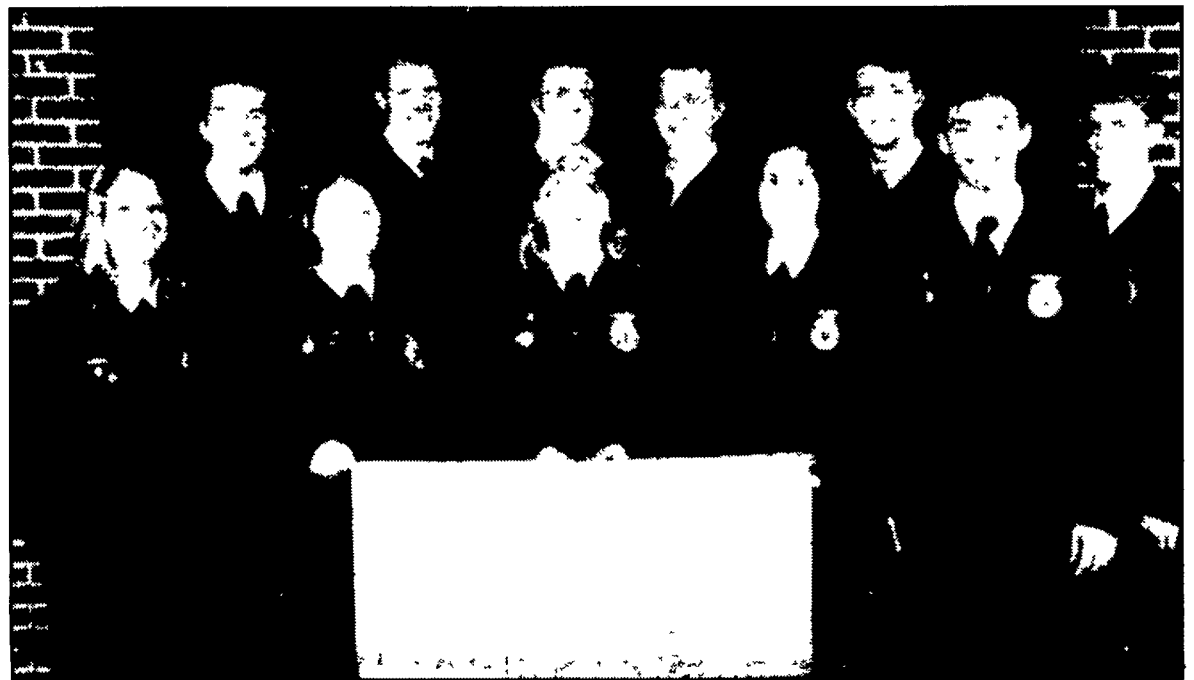
a member of the Eastern York FFA.

The Bermudian Springs FFA in Adams County will have two members on the team. Andrew Allwine, East Berlin, will be the sentinel and Tony Seymore, York Springs, will be the chaplain.

The 2002-2003 state FFA officers were scheduled for orientation training at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture in Harrisburg, June 19-20.

From June 25-July 3, the chosen 11 will participate in FFA state officer training at Wenger's Cabin.

The first board meeting of the Pennsylvania 2002-2003 FFA officer team is scheduled July 11 in Coudersport.



Pennsylvania FFA 2002-2003 State Officer Team. Front row, from left, Courtney Miller, West Snyder FFA, eastern region vice president; Mary Strasbaugh, Cumberland Valley FFA, south central vice president; Emily Grove, Shippensburg FFA, secretary; Julie Flinchbaugh, Eastern York FFA, reporter; and Mark Fulton, Big Spring FFA, treasurer. Back row, from left, David Bittner, Brothers Valley FFA, president; Tim Leshner, Mahantango FFA, Line Mountain High School; Drew Cowden, H. G. Parkinson FFA, Fort Cherry High School, western region vice president; Andy Allwine, Bermudian Springs FFA, sentinel; Tony Seymore, Bermudian Springs FFA, chaplain; and John Lauver, Middleburg FFA, northern region vice president.

PDA Accepting Applications For Nutrient Management Plan Grants

**Next Deadline
Is June 28**

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Applications for the next round of the Pennsylvania Nutrient Management Plan Implementation Grant Program are due by 4 p.m. Friday, June 28.

"Pennsylvania is committed to the preservation of our natural resources," said Sam Hayes, Pennsylvania secretary of agriculture. "Initiatives such as this assist farmers and landowners in installing the best environmentally-friendly management practices on their operations."

Administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) and the State Conservation Commission, the Pennsylvania Nutrient Management Plan Implementation Grant Program is available to farmowners with a livestock or poultry operation that has been in existence since Oct. 1, 1997; has an approved Nutrient Management Plan; and meets the financial qualifications of the program.

The program provides funding to qualified applicants to implement best management practices that are called for in a farm's approved Nutrient Management Plan. Qualified applicants can re-

ceive up to \$75,000 per approved plan.

To date, the PDA has approved over \$8 million for the installation of best management practices.

Signup periods for the Nutrient Management Plan Implementation Grant Program take place on the last five business days of

every other month, including June 24-28. Following June, the next sign-up period will be the last week of August.

For more information or an application, contact your local conservation district, the department's Bureau of Plant Industry at (717) 772-4187, or the State Conservation Commission at (717) 787-8821.



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