

PMMB Maintains Over-Order Premium

(Continued from Page A1) Brubaker also defended the premium by noting that producers will probably not see any Farm Bill payments from the new federal dairy market loss program until October. While sign-up is slated to begin next week, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) is still ironing out regulatory and distribution details for the program.

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While the premium is scheduled to expire at the end of the year, the PMMB must honor the request for a hearing in response to any "emergency situation" that may arise, according to PMMB communications specialist Tracey Jackson. Premium levels can be considered and changed by the PMMB potentially within about a month from the time an emergency hearing is requested.

The next scheduled hearing is set for November, when the PMMB will receive testimony for setting the premium amount for the first half of 2003.

The three-member PMMB consists of Beverly Minor, chairperson and dairy industry representative; Brubaker, dairy producer representative; and Barbara Grumbine, consumer representative.

taking ourselves out of an outside market." Deciding to maintain the premium at \$1.65 "was a very tough decision to make," he said.

new federal dairy market loss program until October. While sign-up is slated to begin next week, the Farm Service Agency

Dairy Program Sign-Up To Begin

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of dairy farms under the market loss assistance program, which is limited to 2.4 million pounds of production annually per dairy operation. Will dairies producing more milk be allowed to name two different operations to collect more funds?

son, Moore said. And that figure includes Farm Bill funds not going to farmers — such as nutrition programs.

While Pennsylvania farmers have historically used less government subsidies than many in other states, Moore said that will have to change.

"To be competitive in agricul-

According to USDA calculations, Farm Bill subsidies cost about 4.4 cents per meal per person.

Mark Stephenson, Cornell University dairy economist, said that the Farm Bill language seems to clearly state "thou shalt not reconstitute your farm business to get more money."

But some lawmakers — most notably Patrick Leahy of Vermont — are suggesting a "more expansive" view which would allow some restructuring of farm operations.

For the time being, "we won't know until the regulations are spelled out," Stephenson said.

Panelists also noted that the definition of farm "operation" in the Farm Bill is still under consideration. For example, it's not clear how a family partnership receiving more than one milk check would be classified.

Lou Moore, Penn State ag economist, was part of a panel that focused on broader aspects of the Farm Bill, including grain provisions, crop insurance, and conservation programs.

Moore noted that increased subsidies in the new Farm Bill came as a result of near-record harvests and slumping crop prices in the last five years.

"When prices are low, the government tends to get involved," Moore said.

To critics of government farm spending, however, Moore said the farm programs come at a relatively small price tag — between 1 and 2 percent of the total U.S. budget.

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Other panelists included Stacey Mitchell of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, who reported that \$4.8 million from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is available to Pennsylvania producers. Sign-up for the program will run on a continuous basis.

Mitchell said EQIP rules are expected to be out for public comment on Aug. 13.

Jayson Harper, Penn State commercial ag specialist, outlined the variety of crop insurance initiatives in the Farm Bill.

Twenty-two Pennsylvania crops are eligible for insurance, including grains, fruits, and vegetables. Remaining sign-up deadlines for this year are Sept. 30 for fall-seeded crops and Nov. 20 for fruit crops.

Harper said that available crop insurance options come at "reasonable costs for pretty good protection."

FSA agents across the state are also sending letters this month for commodity producers to update their acreage, base, and yield records.

"Reviewing verifying, and updating bases and yields may be the most important thing we ask producers to do this year," said Ron Troxell of the Schuylkill County FSA office.

Producers have until Aug. 31 to update records if they want to participate in federal farm programs.

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