

South Central Agribusinesses Open Doors To Tour Guests

DAVE LEFEVER
Lancaster Farming Staff

SHIPPENSBURG (Franklin Co.) — PennAg Industries Association organized a July tour to three agribusinesses in the Shippensburg area.

About 50 guests participated in visits to Cumberland Valley Cooperative, a recently-built Wenger's feed mixing facility, and Four Seasons Crop Care, Inc.

Scott Hodgson, sales and nutrition manager at Cumberland Valley Cooperative, led the group on a tour of the independent feed and farm chemical product and service co-op originally formed in 1929. In recent years, the co-op consolidated from eight former locations throughout the area to the one in Shippensburg. The facility employs 22 workers.

"We build everything from the ground up," Hodgson said of the feed mixing part of the operation. About 80 percent of the feed is formulated for dairy purposes, including "niche" custom-formulated feeds. Average batch sizes are 1½ to 2 tons.

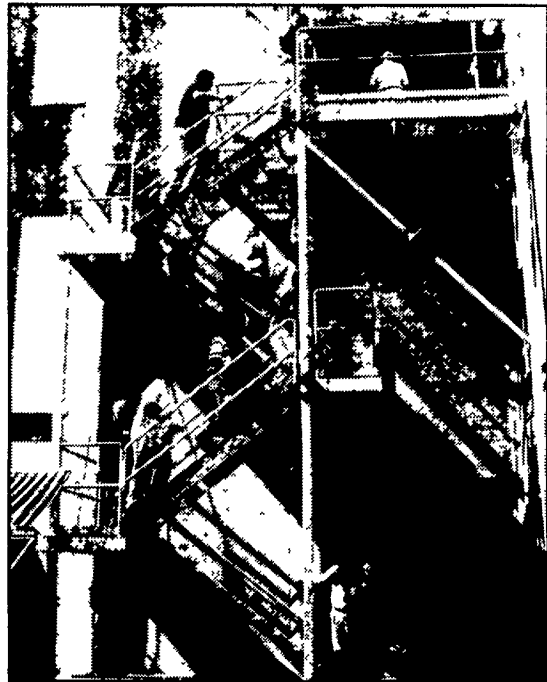
Four years ago, after offering fertilizer and chemical products without service, the cooperative "got into the application business," Hodgson said. This was the result of deciding, "We need to offer a service or get out totally." This year the company covered about 18,000 acres.

Offering both feed and fertilizer puts the co-op in an ideal place to handle to handle increasing nutrient management concerns, according to Hodgson.

"That puts us in a wonderful position for five or 10 years down the road," he said.

Ray Leiby led the group through the Wenger's mill, which was built two years ago. The facility moves out about 4,000 tons per week of pellet and mash feeds for livestock, with a capacity for handling up to 10,000 tons.

Precision, efficiency, and custom mixing capabilities are highlights of the computer-controlled technology at the mill.



Tour participants check out the 2-year-old Wenger's feed mill from bottom to top.

Conference Set

GRANTVILLE (Dauphin Co.) — Mark your calendars. This year's Corn and Soybean Conference is being planned for Feb. 7, 2003 at the Holiday Inn in Grantville.

PCGA is working up the program, but this year they hope to have a half day of general topics followed by two in-depth workshops in the afternoon.

At this point, PCGA is considering one workshop to focus on risk management and marketing and other workshop to focus on post-drought, production-related topics.

"We really have an infinite amount of formulas when you come down to it," Leiby said.

Variability in the feed mixes run at 4 to 6 percent, while the industry standard is 10 percent, according to Leiby.

Rounding out the tour was Four Seasons Crop Care, Inc., a company specializing in custom fertilizer and chemical applications in south central Pennsylvania and several Maryland counties. Ken Sands started the business 10 years ago and continues to run it along with Wilma Rebeck, vice president, and 17 employees.

Sands said he believes in "true teamwork" when it comes to running the business.

"As president, my job is absolutely no more important than that of a part-time truck driver," he said. Together, the Four Seasons workforce covers more than 60,000 acres, using a total of six applicator machines, along with support vehicles.

By mid to late summer, the busy season is past and Sands is already planning and setting goals for the coming year.

"My number one pet peeve in this world is inefficiency," he said.



Scott Hodgson of Cumberland Valley Cooperative leads a tour of the grounds.

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