



Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Many Farmers Are Concerned About SB 1413, And Most of Them Should Be

Editor's note: Though we welcome guest editorials, sometimes the opinions of the writers differ from the editor's. For the benefit of our diverse readership, we strive to provide a balance of opinion in Lancaster Farming.

Guest Editorial By
Brian W. Snyder
 Executive Director
 Pennsylvania Association For
 Sustainable Agriculture (PASA)

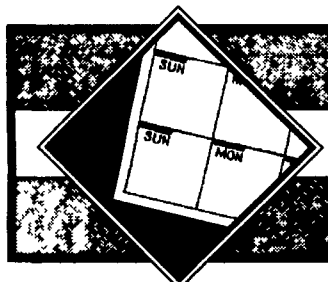
The rhetoric is growing so strong on both sides of the current debate in Harrisburg over Senate Bill 1413. Many folks who have not studied the matter must be helplessly confused about the cause of all this commotion. Behind it, one would expect to find an exhaustively complete and complex piece of legislation that by its nature invites the radically different interpretations we are witnessing.

Surprisingly, the opposite is true. SB 1413 is such a simple affair that the average person would require less than five minutes to read the entire document. In fact, it is the oversimplification and subtle reasoning contained in this potential law that renders it at the same time so controversial and so dangerous to the democratic process.

The reason for the bill, we are told by its sponsors and advocates, is roughly to "protect our largest industry" from any one or a combination of the following three major threats: 1) neighbors, particularly those who are not farmers themselves, 2) the communities in which a farm resides, and/or 3) local elected officials, who, we are told, are busily trying to shut down farms all over the commonwealth. So there they are . . . the true "enemies" of modern agriculture.

My guess is that there are actually very few farmers in Pennsylvania.

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❖ FARM CALENDAR ❖

Saturday, October 26

- High Tunnel Autumn Workshop at Penn State Horticulture Research Center, Rockspring.
- Raising Goats Field Day, Mifflinburg, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., (814) 349-9856, ext. 6.
- Perry County Farm Safety Workshop, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Loysville, 7 p.m.-8:30 p.m., (717) 789-3110.
- York County Cooperative Extension Association Annual Meeting, York County 4-H Center,

- 6:45 p.m., (570) 265-2896.
- Fall Composting Workshop, Patterson Building, Guthrie Square, Sayre, 9 a.m.-noon, (570) 265-2896.
- Maryland Shorthorn Association's Dynamic Duo Spotlight Calf Sale, Frederick County Fairgrounds, Frederick, Md., 7 p.m., (301) 898-5152.
- Third Annual Fall Antique Tractor Pull, Mason Dixon Fair-

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❖ FARM FORUM ❖

Editor:

Once again, the dairy industry is in a crisis mode. Prices paid producers stand at 30-year lows. No matter what size dairy operation, 50 cows or 1,000, the price

of 100 pounds of milk paid to the dairy producers is disgustingly paltry for the amount of capitol, labor, and pride every dairy family places in their operations.

I am ashamed of the leadership roles, both governmental and in our own industry, with respect to the current crisis. I fully understand the laws of supply and demand, but it makes no sense to import the equivalent of more than 600 tanker loads of milk products daily into this country when our producers are being led to believe we have too much product. Personally, I believe that any milk handler or dairy co-op that imports dairy product into this country, should take a very hard look at their leadership.

There is no doubt that the
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How To Reach Us

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Please note: Include your full name, return address, and phone number on the letter. Lancaster Farming reserves the right to edit the letter to fit and is not responsible for returning unsolicited mail.



Now Is The Time

By **Leon Ressler**
 Lancaster County
 Extension Director

To Learn About The New USDA National Organic Standards

On Oct. 21, Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman launched the implementation of USDA's national organic standards for agricultural products to provide consistent labeling on products across the nation.

"Today, when consumers see the USDA national organic seal on products, they will know that the products labeled organic will be consistent across the country," said Veneman. "Organic agriculture is increasing and organic farmers across the country have been looking forward to the release of these regulations with anticipation they will create consumer confidence in their products."

The USDA reports standards were developed from extensive industry input and hundreds of thousands of public comments. As of Oct. 21, any organic agricultural product must meet USDA standards in order to be sold as "organic." Along with the national organic standards, labeling rules were developed to help consumers know the exact organic content of the food they buy. Consumers can tell organically produced food from conventionally produced food by looking at package labels and watching for signs in the supermarket.

"We're very pleased with the work

that USDA employees and the Organic Standards Board have done over the years to finalize these regulations," said Veneman. "Consumers will begin to see the results of these efforts."

The USDA Organic Seal tells consumers that a product is at least 95 percent organic. Processed products that contain 70-95 percent organic ingredients (made with organic fruit for example) can use the phrase "made with organic ingredients" on the label but they can't display the seal.

A recent USDA study determined that U.S. organic farmland has increased from approximately 1.4 million acres to 2.4 million acres. Now any farm or processor that wants to sell products as organically produced must adhere to these new standards. The requirements include operating under an organic system plan approved by an accredited certifying agent and using materials consistent with the National List of Allowed Synthetic and Prohibited-Non-Synthetic Substances.

To assist farmers and produce handlers with the cost of becoming certified, the USDA is administering a \$5 million cost share program in all 50 states, the U.S. territories, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. This program expands the original cost share program that covered only producers and included only 15 states. The Pennsylvania Certified Organic Organization is currently able to certify producers.

The organic crop production standards require that the land will have no prohibited substances applied to it for at least three years before the harvest of an organic crop. The use of genetically modified crops, sewage sludge, or ionizing radiation is not allowed under the standards. The use of organic seeds is preferred but farmers may use nonorganic seeds and planting stock under certain conditions. Management practices including physical, mechanical, and biological controls will be the primary means allowed to control weeds, crop pests, and diseases. If these means do not adequately control the problem a biological, botanical, or synthetic substance approved for use on the National List may be used.

The new standards provide direction for organic animal agriculture as well. Animals for slaughter must be raised under organic management

from the last third of gestation, or for poultry no later than the second day of life. Producers are required to feed livestock agricultural feed products that are 100 percent organic. However, vitamin and mineral supplements may be added to organic animal feed.

Farmers who want to convert an entire, distinct dairy herd to organic production can do so by providing 80 percent organically produced feed for 9 months, followed by 3 months of 100 percent organically produced feed. Organically raised animals may not be given hormones to promote growth, or antibiotics. Preventive management practices, including the use of vaccines, will be used to keep animals healthy.

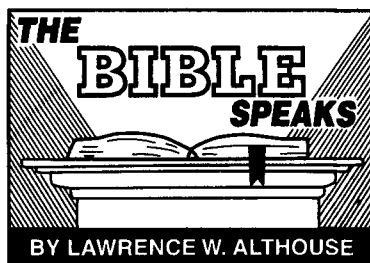
Organic producers are prohibited from withholding treatment from a sick or injured animal; however, animals treated with a prohibited medication may not be sold as organic. The organic standards require all organically raised animals must have access to the outdoors, including access to pasture for ruminants. They may be temporarily confined only for reasons of health, safety, the animal's stage of production, or to protect soil or water quality.

The USDA will set aside \$3 million per year for fiscal years 2003-2007 to administer competitive research grants on organic production, largely through the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service. The research will focus on determining desirable traits for organic commodities; identifying marketing and policy constraints on the expansion of organic agriculture; and conducting advanced research on organic farms, including production, marketing and socioeconomic research.

According to USDA figures, the organic industry is growing between 20 and 25 percent annually, and has been for the last several years. U.S. retail sales of organic foods reached approximately \$7.8 billion in 2000, with global sales topping \$17.5 billion.

The USDA has set up a website providing much more information on the organic standards at www.ams.usda.gov/nop.

Quote Of The Week:
"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."
 — Ralph Emerson



THE BIBLE SPEAKS
 BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

JUST A MINUTE, GOD!

Background Scripture:
 Habakkuk.
Devotional Reading:
 Hebrews 11:32 through 12:2.

I can't help admiring Habakkuk for his forthright relationship with God. There is no pretense, no muttering under his breath, and he comes right out and makes an impassioned complaint: "O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and thou wilt not hear? Or cry to thee 'Violence!' and thou wilt not save?" (1:2). This is the Hebrew equivalent for "Hey, just a minute God, I want an explanation!"

Habakkuk wasn't the first complainant, nor would he be the last. We too want to know how God can permit the perversion of justice and stand by while evil people prevail. As I write this, tomorrow will be the anniversary of September 11, and many are still challenging God to answer for this horrendous tragedy and injustice. God, how can you be "silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?" (1:13).

Note that God doesn't become angry with Habakkuk's audacious challenge, nor does he censure him. Instead, he explains that the Chaldeans, evil as they are, will be instruments through which he will execute his will. Think of the irony here: God says he will use the Chaldeans to chastise his people. The Chaldeans would also be known as the Babylonians, and Babylonia comprised much of what we know of today as Iraq. I pray that God will not use today's Chaldeans to chastise us.

Running & Reading

God finally responds to the challenge, promising an answer that will not be hidden: "Write the vision, make it plain upon tablets, so he may run who reads it. . . For still the vision awaits its time; it hastens to the end — it will not lie. If it seem slow, wait for it. . ." (2:2,3).

Typically, Habakkuk wants an answer right now. Typically, God says that we should just be patient it will come! And that is another age-old complaint from God's children: how long must we wait?

God gives a two-part answer: "Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail, but the righteous shall live by his faith" (2:4). Without any reference to just when this will happen, God says the unrighteous persons will fail. In the five woes (2:6-19), Habakkuk spells out the why and how of that fall. Each woe indicates that the unrighteous will destroy themselves.

The second part of the answer is an assurance to the righteous. The righteous person can look forward to the time when he or she will be vindicated. Until that vindication, he can

live by his faith and trust in that future even though injustice and corruption seem to prevail. The righteous live by trusting, not in present circumstances, but the promise of God: "But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him" (2:20). God is in charge, so we can live without all the answers.

The Greater Benefit

Habakkuk began with an honest complaint and the Lord received it without prejudice. He asked for the alleviation of particular ills, but God does not tell him when these petitions will bear fruit. He then makes a discovery that perhaps has eluded many of us: fellowship with God is more important and of greater benefit than prosperity and an immediate end to all evil. "Though the fig tree does not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fall and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there is no herd in the stall, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (3:17,18).

It is natural and understandable for us to seek and demand answers from the Lord, but the solution is not specific answers or grants, but the abiding presence of God in the midst of a broken world, so that we can live in the power of his promise which is the highest and greatest gift he can bestow upon us.

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