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events of September 11, 2001 changed the habits of many consumers. The tourism industry has lost thousands of jobs and the restaurant trade is reportedly way off.

It is ironic, however, that a company such as Kraft, which is just one of many manufacturers that takes the raw milk product, could report a 73 percent jump in its earnings for the last quarter while the producers wither on the vine.

I am not trying to be critical of the Kraft Company and, in fact, I applaud the Kraft management and other dairy manufacturers for their savvy business sense, they have shareholders they must answer to. It would seem, however, an appropriate time for the leaders of our largest dairy co-ops and the manufacturers of our raw product to come together for a "meeting of the minds."

Every successful business deal brings together a "meeting of the minds," a satisfactory agreement between the buyers and sellers for a product that changes hands. The current dairy climate is not

satisfactory for the dairy producer today, and it will not be satisfactory for the manufacturers in the future when plants face raw material shortages because of massive dairy producer closures. It is imperative that our co-op and manufacturing leaders produce a "meeting of the minds" for the good of all.

My greatest fear is that nothing changes in this world without a confrontation or major upheaval. Many wars have been fought over the years, some necessary, some perhaps not, but the common element found with respect to the ones that really mattered was the leadership involved on the winning side — they were determined and resigned to the fact that no one could trample the rights and diminish the lives of others and that equality stood for something. The dairy industry and virtually all of agriculture in this country is yearning for leadership that will bring together a "meeting of the minds."

Dairy and other farm producers in the U.S. don't need handouts — they need equality, represented in their producer checks. Our dairy producers are as innovative, determined, and proud as any in the world, and continually compete against their counterparts across the globe that receive subsidies three to four times that

which our producers see. Still, our country becomes a dumping ground for millions of tons of product from the world market.

Our producers are continually warned they must lower their inputs, produce their product cheaper, or face the inevitable. Our producers are continually led to believe there is nothing, nothing, that can be done to correct the current conditions they face. The meaningful wars and battles that were fought and won were never won with that attitude. Our industry yearns for leadership.

The leaders of our government and industry, both handlers and manufacturers alike, know there has never been any unity or continuity amongst our producers. It is time to close the ranks. No matter whether you milk 50 cows or 1,000, it is time to bring unity to our industry. It is time for our leaders to step up to the plate, it is time for our free spirits to compromise, for the betterment of our entire industry and the welfare of all our producers. It is time for our producers to stand on equal ground with the rest of the country and receive their just due compensation for all their hard work, dedication, and a job well done. Settle for nothing less than equality.

David M. Rama
Delhi, N.Y.

Department Launches Initiative

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Agriculture Secretary Sam Hayes launched the 2002-2003 crop insurance education and outreach program at the third Annual Crop Insurance Conference, conducted Oct. 24 at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) building, Harrisburg.

The Annual Crop Insurance Conference gives agricultural leaders such as Cooperative Extension agents, insurance agents, USDA Risk Management Agency officials, and agriculture professionals an opportunity to discuss current crop insurance topics and plan the educational needs of producers to increase participation in crop insurance.

"Pennsylvania farmers are faced with increased market and weather-related risk and need access to a crop insurance program that reflects production aspects unique to Pennsylvania. Crop insurance education is a major initiative of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture," Hayes noted. "Pennsylvania's Crop Insurance Conference, co-sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Penn State University, and the Risk Management Agency, provides those individuals that advise

farmers on their risk management needs a chance to revise crop insurance educational curriculum and develop promotional tools that will increase crop insurance enrollment and strengthen the agricultural economy in Pennsylvania."

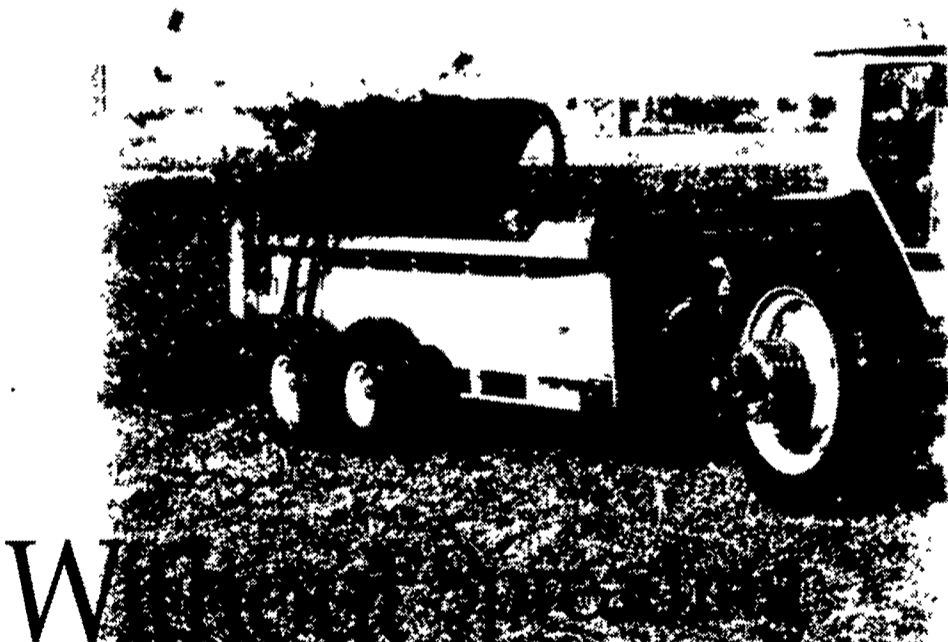
As part of the recent "crop insurance reform movement," the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture seized the opportunity to raise the awareness of the need for crop insurance. Before PDA's involvement, insurance policies in the nation were not inviting for Pennsylvania's diverse agriculture. To help guide the needed changes, Hayes formed a Pennsylvania Crop Insurance Task Force and worked with farmers, agriculture economists, national insurance companies, and the Risk Management Agency to forge a crop insurance program that would be more reflective of mid-Atlantic cropping systems.

To emphasize the importance of risk management, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, working with cooperative extension and the agribusiness community, conducted more than 70 outreach meetings in 2001 that were attended by approximately 4,000 farmers prior to this spring's planting season. Crop insurance participation among Pennsylvania farmers increased 19 percent from 2001 to 2002. Other outreach and educational programs, such as public service announcements, have also been initiated by PDA. These meetings provide the opportunity for farmers to learn about the various crop insurance policy options that meet their risk management needs.

The PDA and Secretary Hayes received national recognition for initiating the reform movement.

To expand the coverage to more eligible acres and crops, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has worked with crop insurance companies and the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation to expand the availability of existing policies and develop more effective policy provisions such as Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR). Pennsylvania has insured more acres under the Crop Insurance Assistance Program than ever before. In just a few years, crop insurance coverage has increased in Pennsylvania from 6,000 policies to approximately 15,000 policies. The Pennsylvania Crop Insurance Assistance Program covers 10 percent of the gross premium (about 20 percent of net) plus the total amount of related fees. This makes CAT policies and coverage free to the farmer. The Pennsylvania program is in addition to any federal crop insurance assistance that may be available from year to year.

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