



OPINION

2002: What To Make Of It

For many producers, last year will go down as one of the worst. In southeast Pennsylvania, we had the worst drought since the Dust Bowl years of the 1930s.

If that wasn't bad enough, milk prices went to the basement and stayed there. They show little sign of recovery.

Unless you agreed to take on debt, it was hard to be able to farm as many family members decided to come home. Herds and other operations increased in size to accommodate the multifamily enterprise.

There were the swords of Damocles over all our heads, from the threats of foot and mouth disease and food production bioterror to West Nile Virus, and closer to home, with all our families, the constant threats of anthrax and similar frights in the age terror on America.

At *Lancaster Farming*, we were occupied with the development of the greatest indoor ag showcase of all time: the new construction and vast renovations taking place at the Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg that will affect production agriculture in the decades to come. That work is highlighted with a special section, Farm Show Showcase, this issue.

For *Lancaster Farming*, 2002 was a good year. We came out with several new sections, including Boarder & Trainer and Farm Show Showcase. We introduced several new columns, including Basically Farming and Del Val Bits. We even took the time to put out a full-color daily newspaper at the National Holstein Convention in Atlantic City during the summer.

Needless to say, we were busy.

We only hope you read last week's in-depth review of the year in agriculture by Michelle Kunjappu, staff writer. That certainly provides insight into what a "roller-coaster" year 2002 has been for agriculture.

But what worries us the most: how will farming thrive if most commodities still barely remain profitable? The control of retail outlets for farm products falls into fewer and fewer hands, putting even more pressure on the local producer. What's to become of the farmer and landowner in 2003?

The coming year has several new, exciting, and unique projects in store for us. You will see some new activity and some different introductions to these pages in the year to come.

Meanwhile, we wish the best of success in your farm enterprise in 2003.

FARM CALENDAR

Saturday, January 4
Vineyard Establishment and Winemaking Seminar, Linden Vineyards, Linden, Va., 10:30 a.m.-4 p.m., (540) 364-1997.

Sunday, January 5
Ice Cream Short Course, Nittany Lion Inn, University Park,

thru Jan. 16, (814) 863-2959.
Farm Bill Workshop, Snyder County Extension Office, County Courthouse, 7 p.m.-9 p.m., (570) 837-4252.

Octorara Young Farmers dairy meeting, Vo-Ag Dept. of high school, 7:30 p.m.
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FARM FORUM

Editor:
 After two years of intensive revelation regarding the improper use of imported milk protein concentrate (MPC) by many cheese makers, dairy farmers

may soon see action taken against some cheese manufacturers.

Information taken from the Internet reveals that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) sent a *warning* letter to Kraft Foods, indicating the agency had inspected three of Kraft's cheese plants and found that Kraft was illegally using MPC in making some of their products.

Pro-Ag and other advocacy groups across the country have been hollering "foul play" regarding Kraft and other cheese companies using the imported MPC.

The FDA letter clearly informs Kraft that milk protein concentrate is not listed in Section 133.173 (d) as one of the optional

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How To Reach Us

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Now Is The Time
By Leon Ressler
Lancaster County Extension Director

To Take Your Family To The Pennsylvania Farm Show

Don't miss this year's new and expanded Pennsylvania Farm Show that will be bigger and better than ever. This year's show has been expanded from six to eight days and will be taking place in the newly renovated and greatly enlarged complex. Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences will take advantage of the broader stage to show off what it has to offer students.

As usual, the college will play a big role in the annual showcase of the state's number-one industry — agriculture — Jan. 11-18. Visitors will see evidence of Penn State's involvement in virtually every area of the sprawling complex.

Throughout the Farm Show, more than 100 Penn State faculty and extension educators will assist with livestock and commodity judging for everything from dairy cattle to maple syrup to mushrooms. Their duties include weighing in animals, handling entry registration, and answering questions from the public.

The college's exhibit and the horticulture department's display — side by side in a new location in the Main Exhibit Hall — have been revamped. The college booth is focused on recruiting students by showing the diverse curricula available. The horti-

culture display will include an "Ask the Experts" forum where visitors can get their home and garden questions answered by horticulture specialists, master gardeners, and extension agents.

The Penn State 4-H display in the Family Living Complex will tell the story of what it is like to be a 4-H member. Current 4-H members will be there to talk to youths about joining the organization and 4-H alumni are encouraged to stop by, say hello, and sign up to receive a newsletter.

At the college's exhibit, the public can learn about a variety of programs and talk to faculty and current students about their academic experiences. The College of Agricultural Sciences has the largest scholarship program at the university, and staff will be on hand to talk with prospective students about admission to Penn State, financial aid and scholarships, changing location to main campus, and any other questions about student life at Penn State.

Also featured will be the Penn State Pullers, 1/4-scale competition tractors designed and built by agricultural engineering students, hands-on activity tables with interactive experiments, and games involving everything from wildlife to animal sciences to food science to horticulture and crops and soils. The public is encouraged to take a few minutes to relax and watch the continuously playing videos about international study opportunities offered by the college and about Ag Progress Days, one of the largest outdoor agricultural shows in the East.

Information about all majors will be available, and visitors will have opportunities to talk one-on-one to college officials and ask questions about financial aid, academic programs, and cooperative extension.

The Farm Show complex is located on Cameron Street, just off of exit 67 of Rt. 81. Hours are 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. from Saturday, Jan. 11 through Friday, Jan. 17; and 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 18. Admission is free and parking is \$5 per vehicle, which includes shuttle bus service from the off-site lots.

For more information, visit the Web at <http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us/> and click on the Farm Show 2003 link.

To Make Decisions About Programs In The 2002 Farm Bill

The slower work schedule in the winter months provides a good opportunity for farmers to evaluate their interest in many programs in the 2002 Farm Bill.

Richard Pallman, state executive director of the Pennsylvania Farm Service Agency, reports "the legislation created many new initiatives, reauthorized popular existing programs, and established record levels of government funding for farmland conservation." He also suggests "this translates into a lot of thinking for farmers to do, and a lot of work for county-level U.S. Department of Agriculture staff. With the passage of the 2002 Farm Bill, the USDA can do more than we ever have before to help Pennsylvania's producers. But these decisions are very important, they can't be made lightly."

The Direct and Countercyclical Program is the hallmark program of the new Farm Bill. It provides for payments to eligible producers of covered commodities, including feed grains, wheat, soybeans, and other oilseeds for the 2002 through 2007 crop years. A major feature of the new law allows producers the option of updating their historical bases and yields. These bases and yields will be used to determine program benefits for the 2002-2007 crop years, or the life of the Farm Bill.

Landowners and operators have until April 1, 2003, to select base acreage and yield options that will then be used for the duration of the Farm Bill. They have until June 2, 2003, to sign up for the direct and countercyclical program. Direct payments for covered commodities are made, regardless of market prices, to producers who have established crop bases and payment yields. Countercyclical payments are issued only if effective prices are less than the target prices set in the 2002 Farm Bill.

Pallman said he and his counterparts across the country are bracing for a brisk sign-up pace in the spring, and are urging farmers to contact their FSA offices as soon as possible. "We just want people to understand that there's a lot of information to digest, and the earlier they contact us, the more help we can be to them," he said.

Quote Of The Week:
"The best way to predict the future is to invent it."
 — Alan Kay

THE BIBLE SPEAKS
 BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

ONE THING MISSING

Background Scripture:
 Mark 10:17-27.
Devotional Reading:
 1 Timothy 6:6-19.

In college I was a member of the Army ROTC. One day our company was assembled in a large hall, four of us to a table. On each table was a 50 caliber machine gun and our assignment was to disassemble it and then put it back together again.

I decided to play a joke on my colleagues at the next table. I filched a small piece of the their machine gun. Although small in size, without this piece they could not get their gun back together. My tablemates and I could hardly stifle our laughs as we heard them fuss and fume over their machine gun. There must have been 50 parts in all, but the one piece I had taken was the key to getting it all together.

That can serve as a kind of parable for all people in general and Christians in particular. People may accumulate lots of things, material and nonmaterial, but still find something is missing in their lives, so that they cannot satisfyingly put those lives to-

gether. I believe it was St. Augustine who said that at everyone's heart there is "a God-shaped blank," a void that only God can fill.

'Good Teacher'

A man ran up and knelt before Jesus, asking, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mk. 10:17). Some of those who asked Jesus questions did so, not to learn from him, but to put him on the spot. But this man knelt before Jesus, showing reverence, calling him "Good Teacher," and indicating that he was quite sincere.

As he often does, Jesus replies with a question: "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone" (v. 18). Some scholars argue whether Jesus' words indicate something contrary to the righteousness that Christians ascribe to him. But this humble, unassuming response is the natural attitude of a pious and devout Jew of this day.

"You know the commandments," Jesus continues, and the man quickly replies, "Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth" (v. 20). This may sound somewhat audacious, but in Jesus' day rabbis thought it quite possible for a man to keep the whole law. So is Jesus implying that eternal life is the reward of those who keep God's commandments? No, I think Jesus is leading him to a higher understanding and, in fact, is challenging him: "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

Owned By Possessions

Unfortunately, this sincere man went away with a fallen countenance because his great possessions owned him and were more precious than eternal life. Had he stayed, he would

have heard Jesus say, "How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" and the startled disciples' response: "Then who can be saved?" Jesus' answer indicates not that people are saved because of their worthiness, but by the grace of God — "With men it is impossible; but not with God; for all things are possible with him" (v. 27).

All of the commandments he kept so faithfully could not earn him God's gift of eternal life. Neither can a wealth which, in fact, can keep us from it.

Our local grocery store puts our purchases in plastic bags with large handles, enabling me to carry a large number of them from the car to the back door. Most often, I can get to the back door, but not through it. I have to put something down. Isn't that what Jesus is saying? It is virtually impossible to enter the kingdom if your arms and your life are loaded with things. You've got to put something down to get inside.

He was a fine, respectable young man and Jesus loved him. But, though he faithfully kept the commandments, the most important thing of all was lacking, total commitment of himself to God. Respectability and good works were not enough. Unwilling to give up his possessions, he demonstrated all too clearly that they came first, and God second. He could not receive God's grace without laying down his wealth.

Take a look at your own life: what do you need to lay down?

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