

Dairy Managers, Others Attend Hispanic Workforce Management Conference

DAVE LEFEVER

Lancaster Farming Staff

GRANTVILLE (Dauphin Co.)

— The Spanish-speaking workforce is growing rapidly on dairy farms and other agricultural operations in the area.

A common experience among farm managers is that Hispanics

are loyal and hard-working, but tend to be reluctant when it comes to accepting supervisory roles.

That was one of the main topics addressed this week at a conference called "Managing the Hispanic Workforce" put on jointly by Penn State and Cornell Universities.

About 90 people attended, including dairy farmers, mushroom growers, and packing plant representatives.

Jorge Estrada, a native of Guatemala and president of a leadership development firm based in Washington state, was one of the speakers throughout the two-day conference. Estrada

said that he has assisted in a variety of cases where Hispanics were successfully promoted into manager positions on North American farms.

"Yes, it is happening," Estrada said. He calls his program "Developing Supervisors from Within."

Herd expansions and the growth of the workforce are making it increasingly necessary for employees to step into supervisory roles, Estrada pointed out. Grooming workers for management positions can also allow greater flexibility in the farm operation and in lifestyles.

"Don't you want to have a family life? Don't you want some vacation time?" Estrada asked, naming some of the reasons for dividing management responsibilities on a farm operation.

Estrada and other speakers at the conference explored some of the cultural dynamics that can help or hinder in managing Hispanic workers and coaching potential leaders for supervisory roles.

Angelo Mino, a native of Ecuador, spoke on the high value placed by many Hispanic workers on their families, native country, and beliefs. He urged employers to welcome, respect, and support Hispanic workers by connecting in these areas, and by providing them with constant learning opportunities.



Jorge Estrada helps farm managers groom Spanish-speaking employees for supervisory roles.

"If you want to keep me forever working for you, create a challenge for me," said Mino, president of Summit Counseling Services, Lenexa, Kan.

Other speakers included Thomas Maloney and David Grusenmeyer of Cornell, Richard Stup and Vinton Smith of Penn State, and attorneys who spoke on handling naturalization issues with Hispanic workers.

More reports on the conference and on Hispanic workers on dairy farms is scheduled for *Lancaster Farming's* Feb. 15 issue of *Dairy Plus*.

Program Provides Market Opportunities

PHILADELPHIA—Farm to City has launched its 2003 direct marketing programs. This Philadelphia-based organization connects farmers to customers through farmer's markets, CSAs, and its Winter Harvest program. Last year, Farm to City's programs resulted in more than half a million dollars in sales by southeast Pennsylvania and south Jersey producers.

Farmer's Markets. This year Farm to City plans to operate 10 farmers' markets located in neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia. These outdoor markets will start in late May and early June and run weekly through October, some into November. Several are established markets needing specialty growers. Others are new markets this year seeking vegetable grower and orchards. Farmers come to these markets to sell what they produce.

Some of the markets will follow the example of the very successful Girard and 13th Street market that matched produce growers with a barbecue stand. This year, if all goes as planned, there will be five locations for this type of market and there is room at all of them for vegetable growers and orchards.

Bob Pierson, program director of Farm to City, observes, "the smell of chicken cooking in a neighborhood is a very strong draw. Our Girard and 13th Street market is the most successful market we have ever opened in Philadelphia." Pierson has planned and operated 14 farmers markets since 1996.

One of the markets in West Philadelphia and another in Germantown offer indoor space year-round in addition to an outdoor market during the warmer months. These markets need producers growing a wide range of fresh and prepared foods to sell year-round.

•**CSA services.** Farm to City also offers support to CSA farmers to help them get a following in Philadelphia. "When we got started in 2000," Pierson said, "there were very few CSA shares sold in Philadelphia because it was very difficult for farmers to market them." In 2001, Farm to City helped farmers sell 240 shares; last year 313 shares were sold, more than 10 times the number of shares delivered before 2000.

•**Winter Harvest.** "Right now, it's Winter Harvest time," said Pierson. Winter Harvest is a buying club in which its members order from a list of 220 locally-produced items for weekly delivery to eight Philadelphia-area communities. "Winter Harvest is a



PASA board member Paul Hauser points out the virtues of his peaches to customers at the South and Passyunk Farmers' Market in Philadelphia.

way for all that good food from nearby farms to come into the city when the farmer's markets and CSAs are shut down for the season," Pierson said. About 20 producers participate in Winter Harvest.

Farm to City is cooperating with the Pennsylvania Association

of Sustainable Agriculture, FoodRoutes, and Philadelphia

food advocacy groups on a "Buy Local, Buy Fresh" campaign, which will be applied to farmer's markets, CSAs, and sales to restaurants this spring and summer.

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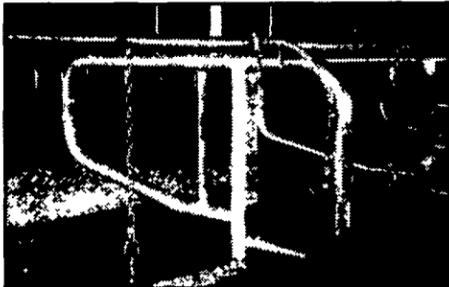
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Large dairies often require a huge labor force. How do dairies deal with communication management issues involving Hispanic labor? What are the challenges other producers have faced and what are their suggestions? See the next issue of *Lancaster Farming's Dairy Plus*, geared toward large-scale dairy operations, in the Feb. 15 issue. Also scheduled: news from the Penn State Hispanic Workforce Management Conference and what's required for the survival of the Northeast dairy industry.



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