

# 'Life Is Good'

(Continued from Page A1)

Landis is pleased with the results. "This is the first year that we're seasonal," he said. "And life is good."

About 100 farmers drove between snow-covered fields Monday to hear grazing topics and view slides of green pastures this week at the two-day Southeast Pennsylvania Grazing Conference at the Solanco Fairgrounds here this week. The local group of graziers has been going strong since it first began in 1993, Landis said. This year also featured two large-scale dairy graziers from New York and Wisconsin, an organic hog producer, a soil expert, and guests from as far away as Ontario.

At the end of December, Landis's entire 90-cow mixed-breed herd went into a dry period. The cows had been bred over about an eight-week period early last summer, with the goal of having them all calve this spring as the various grasses and legumes in the pastures are coming into their prime.

"Good grass is what makes our milk," Landis said. "We're managing the farm with grass."

Landis uses a combination of perennial and annual forages to maximize production on about 125 acres of pasture paddocks on the rented farm. A large part of his perennial grass is fescue, best known for its ability to stretch the grazing season into late fall and early winter. While fescue is not the cows' top choice for grazing, Landis said he has been overseeding the paddocks with white clover in the fall, along with fer-

tilizer. The clover increases the palatability of the fescue and adds protein to the diet.

Landis took replacement heifers off the farm last year to allow the milking cows maximum feed intake from grazing.

"If you're taking grass away from your milk cows to feed (heifers)," he said, "you're losing more money than you realize."

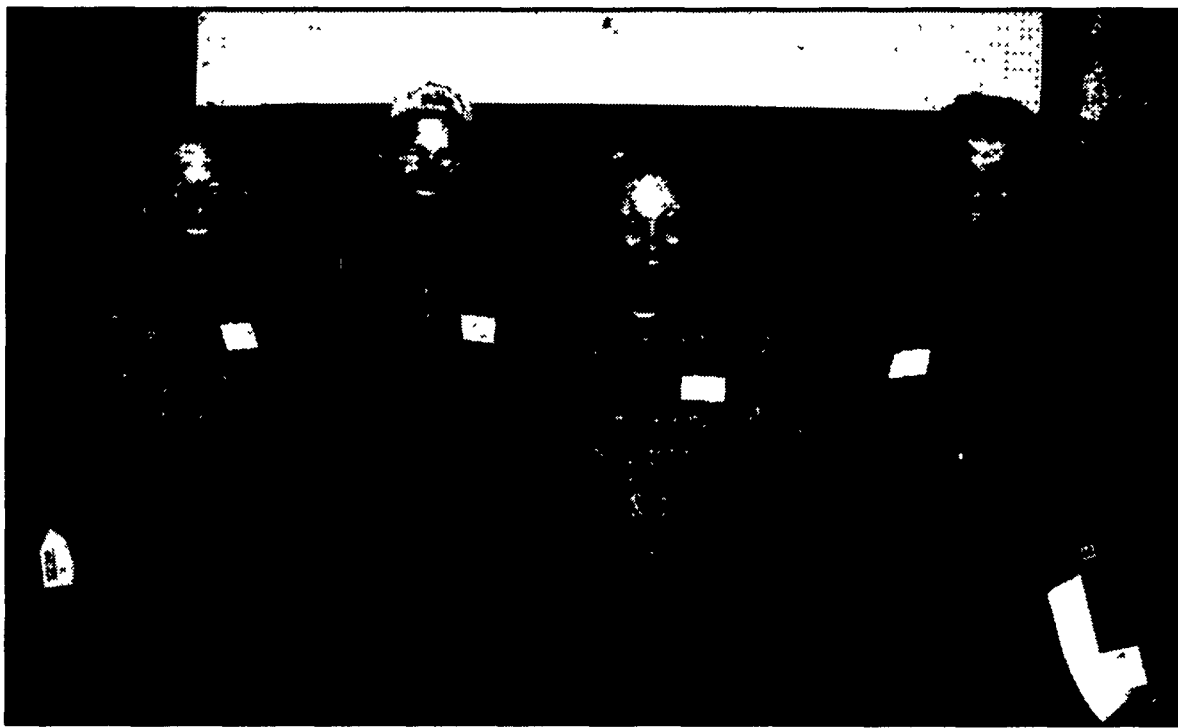
One of the keys to profitability on Landis's operation is its certified organic status. Last year, Landis received an average of more than \$21 per hundred-weight for his milk. That price is practically unaffected by the ongoing slump in the conventional milk market.

Tending the dry herd in the winter is an easy job, according to Landis.

"Managing cows in the winter, about all you need is a 4-wheeler and a tractor to haul bales." The large round bales are rolled out on the paddocks over a wide area to prevent competition. There is little wasted on the dry cows, he said, as their lower nutritional requirements allow them to be fenced in an area until the hay is cleaned up. For windy winter days and nights, he distributes the hay near a tree-line which serves as a windbreak — what Landis calls his "tree-stall" barn.

During times of the year when it is necessary to feed hay to the milking cows, he uses feeder wagons to minimize waste.

The only crop Landis harvests mechanically on the farm is wrapped baleage, a job he called "simple." One person can handle the mowing, raking, and baling. He then hires someone from out-



Graziers speaking at the Southeast Pennsylvania Grazing Conference this week were, from left, Tom Frantzen, Arden Landis, Charlie Opitz, and Gary Burley.

side to do the wrapping.

Beside pasture and free-choice, Landis feeds milking cows 8 to 10 pounds of grain per day — about 70 percent corn and 30 percent oats. Minerals are mixed with the grain.

While Landis estimated his rolling herd average is at about 12,000 to 13,000 pounds of milk — about half to two-thirds the production of an average conventionally-fed Holstein herd, he believes his efficient methods (including a 16-unit New Zealand swing-style parlor), innovative techniques, and unique marketing situation add up to a considerably higher profit margin.

Another perk of running a seasonal operation is lifestyle flexibility. For example, Landis re-

cently took a 12-day vacation.

"It's the first time I've done that since I've been farming," he said.

"Grass farming is more fun than I ever thought it would be," said the former truck driver who first started farming in 1988. "I'm an information-gatherer. I go home and see if it's going to work."

Other graziers speaking at the conference were Gary Burley, 500-cow seasonal dairy grazer from Warsaw, N.Y.; Tom Frantzen, who grazes beef and manages an organic 1,000-hog start-to-finish operation in Iowa; and Charlie Opitz, a 1,300-cow dairy grazer from Wisconsin.

Opitz's 3,700-acre operation has been grass-based since the mid-1980s. He shared the unique challenges and advantages of large-scale grazing and shared problem-solving insights that can be applied to a variety of operations, including smaller farms.

Opitz said he has had a number of interesting conversations

ting the most out of grass-based livestock systems. Opitz said graziers there are curious about what's happening in this country.

"They wonder why the U.S. dairy industry hasn't figured it out yet," he said.

Jim Martindale, an engineer and soil expert from Indiana, spoke Tuesday about light tillage techniques that help aerate the soil and increase water uptake. He plans to return to the area in late March for more demonstrations on the topic.

The conference was moderated by Roman Stoltzfoos, grass-based organic dairy and poultry producer from the Gap area.

Stoltzfoos summed up the speakers' collective attitude on grazing.

"How you think about a problem is more important than the amount of money you have to spend on it," he said.

Read more about what's happening in the grazing world in next week's *Foraging Around* section.

## Pennsylvania Farmers Union Supports Country-Of-Origin Labeling Law

BLOOMSBURG — Pennsylvania Farmers Union (PFU) has urged Congress to require a study that would show the true costs and benefits of the country-of-origin food labeling law included in the 2002 farm bill.

In a letter to Congress this week, PFU and 100 other farm and consumer groups asked

program is implemented in a practical way that benefits consumers and producers. We strongly urge the agriculture secretary to implement the country-of-origin labeling law as directed by Congress."

Breech is encouraging farmers, ranchers, and consumers to ask their elected officials to work

with USDA to make sure the country-of-origin labeling law is implemented with the original intent of Congress. Additional information and a sample letter is available at National Farmers Union's Website, [www.nfu.org](http://www.nfu.org).

over the years with graziers from New Zealand and Australia, countries known for get-

House and Senate members to uphold the congressional intent of the new labeling law despite attempts to weaken the law in implementation.

Recently, the USDA released data on the costs of the labeling provision. The groups are concerned the data may be used to undermine support for the mandatory country-of-origin labeling law, which is to go in effect by September 2004. The new law directs grocery stores to label fresh meats, fish, fruits, vegetables, and peanuts with the country in which it was grown and processed.

"USDA's data fails to include a benefits analysis or recognize existing government regulations and standard marketing practices that can be used to implement the new law," said PFU President Larry Breech. "A true costs and benefits study should be performed to ensure this

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### It's Been a Cold Winter!!! TAKE YOUR CHOICE!!!

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It's 1 a.m. in the morning.</li> <li>2. It's very cold outside.</li> <li>3. It's very warm in bed.</li> <li>4. Bessie may or may not be freshening.</li> <li>5. Get outta bed.</li> <li>6. Pull on some duds.</li> <li>7. Pull on the shoes.</li> <li>8. Get on a coat.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Trudge to the barn.</li> <li>10. Everything's okay.</li> <li>11. You're now wide awake.</li> <li>12. Trudge back to the house.</li> <li>13. Reverse your dressing procedure.</li> <li>14. Crawl back in bed.</li> <li>15. Try to go back to sleep.</li> </ol>
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OR



<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stay in bed.</li> <li>2. Click on the remote.</li> <li>3. Check on Bessie.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Click off the remote.</li> <li>5. Go back to sleep.</li> </ol>
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Keystone handles extremely well compared to other soil-applied herbicides due to the combination of next generation atrazine and a new, advanced surfactant/additive package that keeps the suspo-emulsion formulation uniform and consistent within the tank.

As a result, Keystone is less viscous than other herbicides, so it handles easier and delivers an even spray distribution that provides superior control of grasses and broadleaf weeds. Keystone activates with only 1/4 inch of rain, and has a wide application window — from 30 days early preplant all the way to 11-inch corn.

Keystone delivers 1 1/2 pounds of atrazine when used at the standard 2.65 qt/acre application rate. If you require less atrazine, new Keystone LA herbicide delivers 1/4 pound of atrazine at the standard use rate of 2.0 qt/acre. Both are perfect partners with Horner® WDG herbicide for superior broad-spectrum, one-pass preplant or preemergence weed control.

For more information on new Keystone and Keystone LA herbicides, contact your local ag retailer.



**Jay Holmdal**  
Sales Representative  
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