

Forum Addresses Right Combination To Unlock Future

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Farmer cooperative leaders and those interested in cooperative affairs have an opportunity to learn more about key industry trends and cutting-edge strategies.

The Northeast Cooperative Council will hold its Cooperative Leaders Forum and 54th Annual

Meeting on March 19-20 at The Wyndham Hotel in Syracuse, N.Y.

This year's theme is "The Right Combination to Unlocking the Future." The forum is conducted in conjunction with CoBANK's regional customer meeting.

Bill Hale, president of the Hale

Group, will kick off the Forum with a presentation on the "Changing Food Service Industry."

He is an acknowledged food industry expert and is well known for ability to identify emerging trends and new opportunities within the food system.

Other speakers include: David

Hayes and Joe Getman, attorneys with Bond, Schoeneck & King, LLP addressing the subject of "Best Practices for Governance."

Steve Wright, CEO of Pro-Fac Cooperative will discuss "Restructuring Pro-Fac" and Don Schriver, COO of Dairy Farmers of America, will review "DFA —

Investing in Market Access for Member Milk."

Speakers on the CoBANK segment of the program include: Doug Sims reviewing operating results for CoBANK, Prof. Dave Kohl speaking about "Megatrends in Agriculture" and Prof. Ed Seifried addressing the "The Road to Economic Recovery."

County-Level Results Of State Equine Census Announced

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — County-level data collected from Maryland's first-ever official count of horses, ponies, and mules reveal that 79 percent of the 87,100 equine animals in Maryland are located in 10 northern and central counties on 78 percent of the acreage used for equine purposes.

The top five counties by number of equine reported are: Baltimore (10,630), Montgomery (8,470), Frederick (8,290), Prince

George's (7,420), and Harford (7,390).

"Horses are big business in Maryland and we are one of a very few states to have conducted such a detailed study of the industry so that we can begin to understand its impacts locally," said Agriculture Secretary Hagner R. Mister. "This information shows the size and diversity of this important industry in areas throughout the state."

County-level ranking of the industry by acreage and value follows the inventory closely but not exactly.

For example, Baltimore County ranked first in all categories while Frederick County ranked second in equine-related acreage (22,000) but only seventh in value of horses (\$47.3 million). Kent County did not rank in the top 10 in any category, except in the value of its horses, which is reported at \$29 million.

"We now see that the northern and central counties account for the largest portion of the industry and that equines are important at some level to every county in the state," said Norman Bennett, state statistician for the Maryland Agricultural Statistics Service, which conducted the census on behalf of the Maryland Horse Industry Board.

"Breed-specific information validates the importance of the racing industry as well as other competitive and recreational equine activities."

Thoroughbreds (28,800) and Standardbreds (5,800) primarily associated with horse racing account for 40 percent of all breeds.

Light breeds such as the Morgan, Arabian, Quarter Horse, and American Saddle, most commonly associated with recreational and non-racing competitive activities, make up 42,000 animals or 48 percent of all breeds. Draft breeds, ponies, mules, donkeys and burros make up the balance of the 87,100 animals.

"This study can be utilized by horsemen and government planners at the state level, and equally as important, at the county level," said Gregory W. Gingery, chairman of the Maryland Horse Industry Board. "Many horsemen's concerns such as zoning and land conservation are local issues."

Statewide, the horse census reveals an industry with assets valued at \$5.2 billion and annual expenditures of \$766 million. There are more than 87,000 horses, ponies, mules, donkeys and burros in over 20,000 locations around the state on 206,000 acres.

Census forms were mailed this summer to 23,000 potential horse owners and stable operators in all segments of the industry from racing to recreational riding. The results reflect the number of equine animals in Maryland in the fall of 2002 and expenses and assets during the previous year.

For complete census results, visit www.marylandhorseindustry.org.



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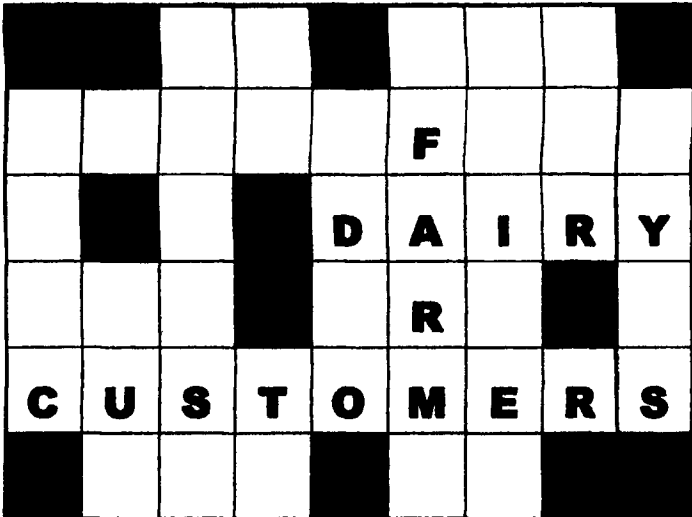


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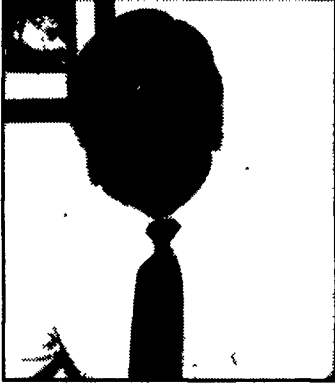
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