

Spring Decisions For Agricultural Producers

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.)—Current economic conditions in the farm community dictate that farmers in Pennsylvania take action to minimize risk.

"There are two steps that farmers can take right now that will be well worth their time," said Richard Pallman, state executive director of the Pennsylvania Farm Service Agency (FSA).

The FSA is enrolling farmers into the Direct and Countercyclical Payment Program (DCP). The DCP is designed to be an equitable means of assistance for growers of agricultural feeds and grains. This program provides grain producers with the best price protection program afforded farmers in several years.

Two forms of benefits are made available in DCP. A guaranteed direct payment is made each year at an established payment rate. Additional payments are issued when market prices are low—this is called a "countercyclical (CC) payment."

"DCP participation guarantees farm operations direct payments—regardless of market prices—and countercyclical payments—depending on national average market prices. This is a safety net that producers cannot afford to miss," said Pallman.

The first step is deciding whether to update your base and yield for the 1998-2001 time period. Two decisions go hand-in-hand. First, whether to update your base or freeze it at the exist-

ing 2002 production flexibility contract (PFC) base. In either case, you can add eligible oilseed acres. Second, whether to freeze your yields at the existing 2002 PFC levels or update your countercyclical (CC) payment yields for all covered commodities on the farm.

If you did not have a PFC for 2002, then it becomes very important for you to go to your FSA office and establish your bases. The county FSA committee will assign a direct payment yield to each farm with history acres for the period 1998-2001 but was not on a PFC for 2002.

Growers need to visit FSA as soon as possible to choose a base and yield option which will be the basis of their participation through 2007. It should be noted that since the benefits available for the next six years will be based on historical plantings, this one-time, first step in the process is very important.

Deadline for base and yield selections is April 1, 2003. Should producers who were not previous PFC participants miss this deadline, they will be ineligible for the price protection this Farm Bill provides through DCP.

Should previous PFC participants miss this deadline, DCP benefits for the remainder of this Farm Bill will be based on existing base and yield information, and they will have lost the opportunity to make adjustments in their favor.

The second step is for producers to sign a contract for program participation. June 2, 2003, is the final date to sign a DCP contract for 2002 and 2003 participation. Sign-up will be conducted annually for each of the four remaining program years.

Producers not participating in the DCP will not be eligible for direct and countercyclical payments. Producers who do not participate in the DCP program, however, will be eligible for com-

modity loans and LDPs when they are available.

It is important to start the process now because sign-up activities may require that you make more than one visit to FSA.

FSA will assist growers throughout the sign-up process; however, you can greatly speed up the process by doing your homework. Review the information mailed to you concerning the planting history and yields assigned to your farm. If informa-

tion is missing or inaccurate, you can take certain steps to correct it. Evidence to substantiate plantings for the years 1998 through 2001 is still being accepted by FSA. Updating your history could greatly impact future program benefits.

Sign-up activities require that many growers visit the office more than once. Please contact the office for an appointment prior to your visit. Office staff can then prepare for the visit to greatly speed the process.

Pennsylvania Farmers Union Receives Farm Aid Grant

BLOOMSBURG (Columbia Co.)—Pennsylvania Farmers Union has received a \$5,000 grant from the Farm Aid Foundation to help promote its mission of strengthening the family farm system of agriculture by keeping family farmers on the land to produce America's food.

Larry Breech, president of Pennsylvania Farmers Union, announced that the grant will be used to launch the Family Farm Empowerment Project to improve farm income and independence of family farmers and ranchers and rural communities.

"The Family Farm Empowerment Project is intended to build,

educate and update an effective and informed coalition of family farmers and ranchers and rural supporters to promote an economically viable family-based agriculture," Breech said. Pennsylvania Farmers Union will work with other organizations to help train individuals on how to successfully convey the benefits of a family-based system of agriculture.

"Our family farm members greatly appreciate this generous support and encouragement to help survive these trying times," Breech said. "Willie Nelson's support of this initiative and determination to the success of

family farms and ranches makes this project possible."

Much of the money raised by Farm Aid was the result of a sold-out concert in September 2002 at the Post-Gazette Pavilion in Burgettstown. Farm Aid's 2002 grants, which were distributed to many farm groups across the U.S., will be used to fund a variety of programs, including emergency grants to farmers hit by low prices and weather-related disasters, legal and financial counseling to help farmers avoid foreclosure, cultivation of new direct markets for family farm produced livestock, and crops, outreach, and organizational development.

Maple Syrup: Above Average Crop Predicted

ROCHESTER, N.Y. — After last year's above average crop of maple syrup, an above average crop of maple syrup from western New York is predicted, due to heavy snows and lack of frozen soil. In addition, the heat and drought of the past summer promised to increase sugar production for most maple tree varieties. Consequently, there is also expected to see a good to excellent sugar content for most sap production.

Despite the drought this past summer, maple trees were healthy going into the winter. Even though the leaves turned early, there was not a lot of browning of the foliage. Heavy snow during

the winter months has promoted deep subsoil moisture and has promoted good tree health during the winter months.

We soon expect a winter thaw (temperatures above 32 degrees) for a three to four day period which may trigger the first run of sap for many sugar bush operations.

Above average snowfall has contributed to saturation of most soils and for most areas the soil is not frozen. Consequently a winter thaw to promote an initial heavy sap flow for most area producers is expected.

For 2002, the season opened on February 22 and closed on March 29.

This was the earliest tap-

ping since records began in 1972. The extended season pushed yield per tap to the highest level since 1966.

This year's cold winter weather has encouraged a more normal window for tapping trees. Typically, tapping for the western New York region starts during the end of February. However, some maple syrup producers may try to tap during early February.

Ideal conditions for tapping are freezing temperatures at night and just above freezing temperatures during the day (32-40). This creates a differential in pressure of the tree to encourage sap flow. Typically, the tree will generate 12 pounds per square inch to encourage sap

flow. It takes 10 to 12 gallons of sap to make one quart of syrup. In addition, good subsoil moisture will ensure an adequate supply of soil moisture for sap production as well as a differential in pressure. For many areas, we have achieved these ideal conditions for tapping trees.

We expect prices to be similar to last year as carryover stocks are low this year. Prices paid by consumers are expected to range from \$25 to \$45 per gallon depending on the grade of syrup.

Maple syrup production for the United States totaled an estimated 1.36 million gallons, up 29 percent from last year's production. Vermont led the U.S. with 495,000 gallons. Maine was the second leading state with a production of 230,000 gallons, 15 percent more than 2001. New York is the third in syrup production with an estimated 228,000 gallons.

Program Offers Opportunities

Penn State Cooperative Extension in cooperation with the Small Business Development Center at Kutztown, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Ben Franklin Technology Partners and USDA RDA is excited to announce the upcoming program "Income Opportunities for Rural Areas."

This conference is an excellent opportunity to explore non-traditional agriculture related businesses with an eye on enterprise startup.

The conference targets those seeking to get started in some kind of new agricultural business or diversify their present operation.

A few of the conference enterprise topics: Deer Farming, Meat Goats, Hydroponics, Strawberries, Cut Flowers, Greenhouse Production, Ornamental Crops and much more.

Business topics such as, Starting your Business A-Z, Financing your venture, Web-Based Marketing, and Marketing Non-Traditional products are all part of the morning plenary session.

Income Opportunities for Rural Areas will be conducted on Saturday, March 29 from

8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Dickinson College, Emil R. Weiss Center for the Arts in Carlisle.

The cost of the program is \$35 per person for the first person from each household and \$25 for the second.

This includes all handout materials, lunch, and break snacks. Pre-registration is required.

For registration forms or additional information, please contact Steve Bogash, Franklin County Cooperative Extension (717) 263-9226. Registration forms will also be available from the Adams and Cumberland County Extension offices.



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SAT., MARCH 1, 2003

@ 9:00 A.M.

LOC: 312 Chestnut Grove Rd., Village of Highville, Manor Twp
Lanc. Co. PA (Dir. Between Safe Harbor & Creswell, along River Rd.)
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Restaurant Equipment Auction

**Monday, Feb. 17, 2003
10 am**

Ponderosa Steak House

3047 N. 5th St., Reading, Pa.

No Buyer's Premium!

Building demolition creates great auction! Hot and cold food bar with nice oak trim, (70) Windsor type light blonde wood chairs, (18) 24"x24" tables, (16) 24"x48" tables, oak trimmed booth seating, pictures and decor, baker's nook neon sign, Migali single door freezer, Traulsen single door refrig, (2) Frymaster fryers, Volrath gas convection double stack ovens, Mantowoc large capacity ice machine on bin, Hobart dish washer, (3) SS prep sinks, (3) SS prep tables, lots of Metro shelving and bakery carts, Henny Penny warmers, Hosizaki ice machine, interior oak and brass trim, counters, good small items: SS insert pans, trays, sheet pans, Walk in cooler, Globe slicer, Blakesley 20 qt. mixer.

Late Model Equipment Added From High End Restaurant, open only 2 years
Vulcan 65 lbs gas fryers, Pitco gas table top fryers, Cres Cor holding cabinets, (2) Traulsen refrigerated, octagonal, revolving pie cases - (Like New!), refrigerated sandwich tables, hot dogger, 10' exhaust hood, and more! Nice lot of Syracuse white china, new stock pots, pans, utensils, small items for all types of food service.

Directions: Directly across from Fairgrounds Mall. From Lancaster take Tr. 222 to Rt. 422 West, Take Rt. 12 East Exit towards Pricetown, Take 5th St./Rt. 222 exit towards Allentown. From North take I-78 to Rt. 61 South at Leesport. Turn left on E. Belleview Ave, Turn right on Allentown Pike

Terms: No Buyers Premium. 48 Hr removal, cash and Pa. Checks.

**Mark Baranowski AU 2570
(717) 657-2317**

We are always seeking quality consignments of Restaurant Equipment and Food Service Items. Please call our offices!