

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

(Continued from Page A10)

of disease-resistant varieties of tomatoes, snap beans, and pumpkins; cultivar evaluations; no-till pumpkin production techniques; atrazine alternatives for sweet corn; high tunnel and plasticulture techniques; and greenhouse bio-control strategies to name a few.

Seven years ago, the PVMRP applied for a matching grant from the Department of Agriculture to promote Pennsylvania vegetables on billboards across the state. That effort inspired the department itself to undertake a produce promotion program that has developed into the "Simply Delicious" Promotion that has resulted in the state spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to promote vegetables (and fruits) on billboards (more than 350 last year), on point-of-purchase materials in supermarkets, and on radio and television (more than 2,000 television ads were aired last summer). The department has also used its influence to encourage supermarkets to purchase more local produce. While the PVMRP cannot claim credit for all that the state has done through the

"Simply Delicious" program, the PVMRP is part of the foundation upon which the "Simply Delicious" promotion was built.

The board of growers responsible for guiding the PVMRP has adopted the "Simply Delicious" logo and theme for all of its promotional activities. The PVMRP has promoted Pennsylvania vegetables on billboards (more than 40 last year); with point-of-purchase materials (supplied to about 400 farm markets last year); by new releases throughout the summer (which have resulted in about 100 articles per year in newspapers across the state reaching, 24 million readers over the years); and with publications (directories for both growers and buyers). The program has worked with the Department and PVGA to represent the industry at the national Produce Marketing Association trade show as well as at various events in the state.

The PVMRP is a prime example of how growers working together can help build the state vegetable industry in ways that would not be possible without growers working together. The assessment monies collected by the program have been used to fund research that otherwise might not have been undertaken. And grower dollars invested in vegetable research are a proven way of leveraging additional research funds from government sources and elsewhere for projects of direct benefit to growers. University administrators recognize that the vegetable industry is willing and able to annually fund vegetable research. They in turn are more likely to support vegetable researchers with other resources they have available.

Through the PVMRP, growers are helping themselves

collectively rather than waiting for a government hand-out. The net result, however, has been that for the last seven years, the PVMRP has been able to double, and in one case triple, grower assessment dollars for promotion through the Department of Agriculture's Matching Grant Program. None of those funds would be available to the vegetable industry if the PVMRP did not have grower assessment dollars to match the Department of Agriculture's grants. Instead, that money would go to other agricultural industries for promotion.

With the change in administration in Harrisburg, it even more crucial that vegetable growers send a signal to Secretary of Agriculture Dennis Wolff that vegetable promotion and the "Simply Delicious" promotion are important to growers. If growers are not willing to promote their own products through the PVMRP, the Department of Agriculture may well question the reasonableness of spending taxpayer dollars that are in tight supply to promote Pennsylvania "Simply Delicious" vegetables.

Clearly, now is not the time to walk away from the progress the PVMRP has accomplished in the past 15 years. Now is the time to continue that progress by voting "Yes" to continue the Pennsylvania Vegetable Marketing and Research Program. Vote "Yes" for vegetables.

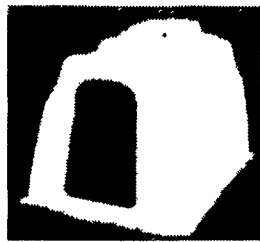
Highlights of the March Pennsylvania Forage and Grassland Conference are scheduled for the April 19 Pennsylvania Forage and Grassland Council's (PFGC's) *Foraging Around* newsletter. Included: PFGC award presentations, conference updates, and news and information.

AGRI-PLASTICS

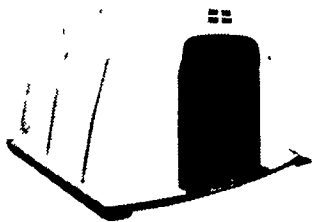
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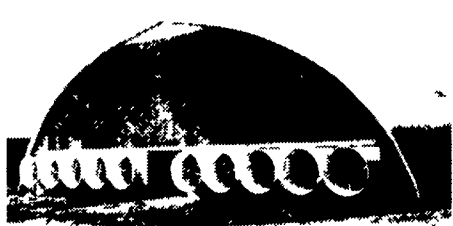


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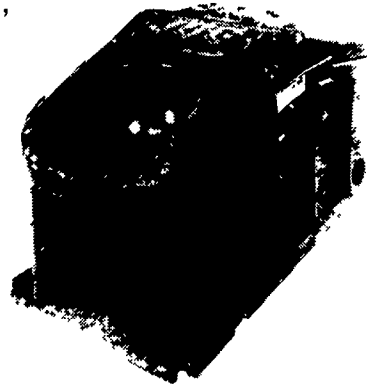
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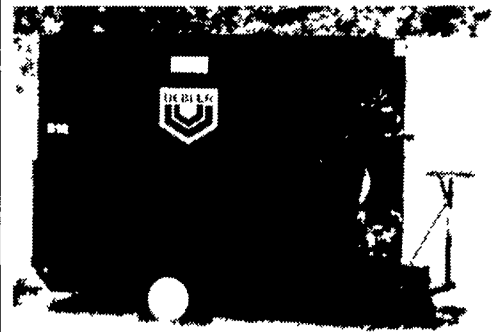


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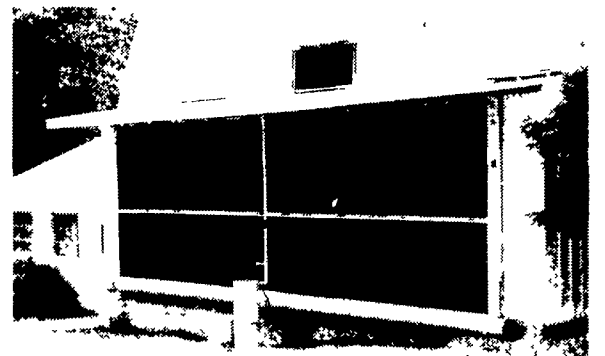
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