

Revolutionary Crop Yields

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high yielding dwarf wheat varieties that helped turn Third World countries such as India into food exporters. The wheat varieties were introduced into India and Pakistan in 1965. Borlaug's work helped prevent starvation and malnutrition across the globe.

5. The agricultural debt crisis of the 1980s, which started when the Federal Reserve Bank encouraged higher interest rates to slow inflation. This forced many full-time family farms out of business, created rural bank failures and crippled small towns.

6. The 1962 publication of Rachel Carson's book, "Silent Spring." Carson, a nature writer and former marine biologist, documented how the insecticide DDT accumulates in the environment and harms mammals and birds. Her book helped start the environmental movement.

7. The use of antibiotics for livestock and poultry, approved by the Food and Drug Administration about 50 years ago. Adding antibiotics to the feed of hogs and chickens not only prevents disease, it makes the animals grow faster. And it makes it easier to confine them in large buildings with fewer disease outbreaks. Medical research has also identified overuse of antibiotics in livestock production as one reason antibiotics are becoming less effective medicines for humans.

8. Tie. NAAJ members gave equal votes to two developments: the adoption of no-till farming, which avoids plowing and slows soil erosion, and the fact that the farm population dropped below 2 percent of U.S. population for the first time during the 1990s.

9. The adoption of anhydrous ammonia fertilizer, a cheap source of nitrogen fertilizer made by using natural gas. Until anhydrous ammonia was adopted in

the 1950s, farmers relied on animal manure and leguminous plants such as clover to provide this key plant food. Without cheap nitrogen, the high yields of hybrid corn and dwarf wheat would not have been possible.

10. Integration of the poultry industry. Most farmers once owned a few chickens to raise for meat and eggs. In the 1960s, once chickens could be confined in large buildings thanks to antibiotics and abundant cheap corn, the ownership of chickens gradually concentrated with a few companies. Those companies pay farmers a fee for each bird they raise for the company. A similar process of vertical integration is taking place today in the hog industry.

NAAJ members identified several other key trends that weren't on the historians' lists. They include the increasing mechanization of agriculture in general. For example, mechanical tomato pickers (which were on the list but didn't make the top 10) became popular in the 1960s. The U.S. grain export boom of the 1970s that followed sales to the former Soviet Union in 1972 was another key event. So was elimination of rail freight subsidies for grain in Canada, which led to more exports of Canadian crops and livestock into the U.S.

A list of 40 important events and changes in agriculture was prepared for the NAAJ members by three leading agricultural historians, R. Douglas Hurt of Iowa State University, C. Fred Williams of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and David Vaught of Texas A&M University.

NAAJ was formed as Newspaper Farm Editors of America. Today the group represents about 100 newspaper, magazine, and news service writers who cover agriculture in the U.S. and Canada.

Drought's End Should Lower Corn Prices For Pennsylvania Livestock Producers

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Pennsylvania livestock producers — forced to buy more corn than usual to feed their animals after last summer's drought nearly wiped out their corn crops across the state — can take solace in predictions that corn prices are likely to drop later this year, according to an expert in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

"With good weather, we'll have a good crop and steady to slightly lower corn prices for feed by fall," says Lou Moore, professor of agricultural economics. "Pennsylvania was hit particularly hard by the drought, harvesting just 64.6 million bushels last year. The crop was just slightly higher than the one harvested in the severe drought of 1988."

Persistent drought in the Midwest and high transportation costs resulting from soaring gasoline prices have combined to boost the price of corn to more than \$3 a bushel. Although the drought seems to be over in Pennsylvania, continued dry conditions are forecast for the Mid-

west. And oil prices remain extremely volatile due to war and political unrest in the Middle East and South America.

Corn is most important as feed for dairy cows in the state. Pennsylvania remains the nation's fourth largest milk-producing state, and fully 40 percent of Pennsylvania's agricultural receipts are generated by the dairy industry. Corn also is used as feed for beef cattle, swine, and poultry. Virtually all field corn grown in the state is fed to livestock.

"So when we have a severe drought like last year, it hurts livestock producers most because they have to buy more feed," Moore explains. "Even though there is a lot of corn grown in the state, Pennsylvania's corn production represents just 2 percent of the national corn crop."

"Pennsylvania is the 18th most important agricultural state in the country," Moore adds. "According to a report released in late March by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, 1.45 million acres of corn are ex-

pected to be planted in the state in 2003. More than 79 million acres of corn will be planted across the country. So even though we are the most important corn state in the Northeast, we do not produce enough to have any influence on corn prices."

Nationally, Moore points out, about the same amount of corn will be planted this year as last, ending a trend toward farmers planting less corn and more soybeans. He attributes that change to lower government subsidies for soybean production.

Less corn is expected to be grown this year in Plains states such as Nebraska because of continuing drought, but prospects appear good for corn production in what Moore called the "eastern corn belt," states such as Ohio, Illinois and Indiana.

"This should be the eighth consecutive year in which the corn harvest will be over 9 billion bushels, making it feasible to feed livestock," Moore says. "If the weather is favorable, this year could produce a near-record crop."

NFU Lauds Signing Of Supplemental Aid Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. — National Farmers Union claimed two victories for America's farmers and ranchers as President Bush signed the supplemental appropriations bill last week.

The bill, which provides supplemental defense funding for the war, also addresses various other issues, including language to close an organic labeling loophole and to meet humanitarian food needs without harming domestic markets.

The legislation repeals a provision passed earlier this year that

would have weakened the organic standards by loosening the requirement that livestock be fed organic feed in order to be labeled "organic." NFU had urged Congress to close the loophole and stay true to the organic standards that were issued in October 2002.

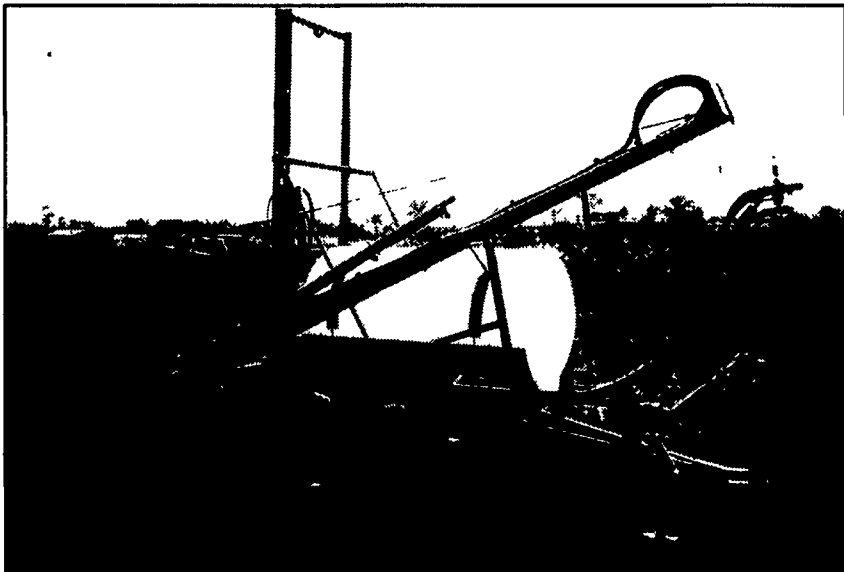
Additionally, the supplemental

bill ensured that the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust (BEHT) would fulfill food aid commitments while minimizing negative impact on domestic markets. Initially, the administration planned to sell wheat from the BEHT to purchase rice for use as humanitarian aid to suffering Middle East countries.

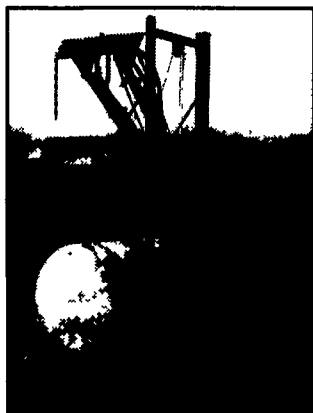
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