

Grower & Marketer

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Community Supported Agriculture In Full Swing At Fulton Farm

DAVE LEFEVER
Lancaster Farming Staff

CHAMBERSBURG (Franklin Co.) — Chambersburg-area residents who want fresh, locally grown food can find it just about all year long at Fulton Farm on the campus of Wilson College.

Customers buy seasonal shares in the community supported agriculture (CSA) operation and receive a weekly supply of "certified naturally grown" vegetables in return.

"Certified naturally grown" is a relatively new designation,

meaning food produced in compliance with certified organic standards but without the paperwork and certification fees to back up the claim. In this case, neighboring farmers inspect the operation.

That system makes a lot of sense on Fulton Farm, according to Matt Steiman, farm manager.

"There are those of us who don't have time for all the paperwork or money for the fees, yet still grow by the same methods," Steiman said.

The cost and time required

for organic certification would be prohibitive for a small farm

like this one, where most of the produce is picked up by

customers on the farm, Steiman said. Visitors are welcome to see any aspect of how their food is grown — and many of them do.

"It's great here," said Donna Nordin of Fayetteville.

Nordin and her two children, Bailey, 5, and Leo, 2, took a casual tour of the greenhouses and farm on April 29, the first CSA pickup for the 2003 growing season.

"We eat a lot more vegetables since we get them every week," Nordin said.

Steiman and his partner, Jenn Halpin, are responsible for growing and distributing produce for about 90 CSA members and their families from April through November. About 30 members con-

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Matt Steiman, manager at Fulton Farm, grows extended-season spinach, mixed greens, and other vegetables in two passive solar greenhouses.

Photo by Dave Lefever

Have A Place For A Pond?

Here Are A Few Points To Consider Before Taking The Dive

MICHELLE KUNJAPPU
Lancaster Farming Staff

BRICKERVILLE (Lancaster Co.) — Perhaps it is that corner of the yard that could use a new look.

Maybe it is the section of the deck that would lend itself to an added attraction.

Possibly it is the appeal of having colorful fish and throaty, croaking frogs on the property.

Whatever the reason, home-

owners are lining up to put in liners and begin ponds in their backyards.

An Increasing Trend

Brian Smith, water garden manager at Esbenshade's Greenhouses and Garden Centers, describes the interest as "an ongoing trend that's been increasing over the last 5-10 years," he said.

"I think people are spend-

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With Consumers, Product Integrity Critical To Survival Of Organic Label

ANDY ANDREWS
Editor

BIRD IN HAND (Lancaster Co.) — For consumers to rally around the organic ideal, first there has to be integrity and trust in the process, according to Leslie Zuck, ex-


ecutive director of the Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO) Association.

Zuck spoke at PCO's Organic Standards and Production Workshop in early March at the Bird In Hand Family Restaurant.

Ensuring that trust with consumers often takes time and can be involved, but inspectors are necessary to ensure the "viability of the system you have developed," said

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Putting Water To Work

Fish Hatchery Finds Opportunity In Niche Market

MICHELLE KUNJAPPU
Lancaster Farming Staff

MERCERSBURG (Franklin Co.) — If any other farm family would see that 300 of their acres are under water, they would call it a disaster.

For some operations, however, land under water is the necessary element to grow the operation's cash crop: fish.

At Mount Parnell Fisheries, Incorporated, the fish — saved by their flashy colors and translucent fins — are not headed for a grocery store or

seafood market.

The business sells 15 types of ornamental fish to distributors who then merchandise the fish to pet shops or water garden centers.

The 300 acres of water include more than 300 ponds ranging from a quarter acre to six acres in size.

Approximately 60-70 distributors buy the fish. "Most of our customers get fish 52 weeks a year," said Mike Rice, manager of the family busi-

ness. Thirty percent of the fish are exported to countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Spain, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Canada, and Puerto Rico, besides the continental U.S.

Half of the crop is feeder fish — the smaller, more modest "Comet" goldfish that owners feed to their larger, tropical fish.

Besides the comet goldfish, Shubunkin (calico-colored

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Mount Parnell Fisheries, Inc. sells 15 types of ornamental fish to distributors. Mondays may start at 5 a.m. for employees such as Herbert Hostler, who need to get the fish off to the airport for shipment. Photo by Michelle Kunjappu