

Corn: To Grow Or Not?

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Instead of buying land, Charles Marshall from the federal Farm Services Agency advised beginning farmers to "put your money into income-producing things. You have to reduce the amount of money you need. Do not buy land at the outset."

- Use credit sparingly — and wisely.

- Save your money.

"Don't go out to eat, buy new cars or a lot of new clothes," advised Brian Moyer, a Berks County pastured poultry producer. "Go to the store very little. Make do with what you have."

- Add value to what you produce.

"Value-added is where farmers here in Pennsylvania and the rest of the Northeast can beat the socks off of those of us in the Midwest who raise corn," said Looker. "We may have some of the best soils and flattest fields on earth, but you've got millions of potential customers."

Holley Moyer, Brian's helpmate, said she does that by turning her goat milk into several different kinds of "pot cheese," which is exempt from food processing laws. Just one gallon of milk produces one pound of cheese that retails for \$14, which is more than most dairy producers receive for milk by hundredweight.

The Moyers first bought goats to reclaim overgrown land.

- Buy crop insurance, advised John Berry, Extension marketing specialist for southeastern Pennsylvania. It is a good risk management tool, comparable to homeowners, health and auto insurance.

Secretary Supports Aquaculture

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Agriculture Secretary Designee Dennis C Wolff announced the opening day of trout season. In support of the Pennsylvania Aquaculture program, the Department of Agriculture encourages everyone to eat more of the commonwealth's fresh and healthy farm-raised trout.

"Research has proven that farm-raised trout contribute to a healthy diet," Secretary Wolff said. "Trout season provides the community with a perfect opportunity to enjoy the benefits of eating one of Pennsylvania's fine agricultural products fresh farm-raised trout."

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) is working to ensure that Pennsylvania waterways are filled with farm-raised fish. In order to reduce effluents and potential pollutants in trout, PDA asked Zeigler Brothers, Inc. to

- Explore the financial, land, housing and other resources of your extended family before turning to lenders and real estate agents.

Federal farm programs, the speakers said, won't do much for beginners since they mostly help larger, established farms that are getting bigger and pushing land prices higher. That's especially true of commodity programs.

Hog production, once a traditional "mortgage burner," is also risky for beginners, unless they specialize in pastured or organic production and direct marketing, usually to some niche market.

Successfully getting started in farming today all comes down to learning to be a successful entrepreneur, not just an agronomist or tractor driver, concluded Marion Bowlan, executive director of Pennsylvania Farm Link.

Key personality traits include passion and persistence, good health and lots of energy, creativity and innovation, independence and self-reliance, good intuition, self-confidence, market awareness, lack of need for status, acceptance of challenge and a strong work ethic.

As what she called a "calculated risk-taker," you'll no doubt figure out pretty quickly on your own that corn is definitely not the place to start.

Editor's note: George DeVault raises certified organic vegetables in Lehigh County. He is a Food and Society Fellow, a program of the Thomas Jefferson Agricultural Institute in partnership with the Institute for Agricultural and Trade Policy and funded by the W.K.Kellogg Foundation.

perform an experiment. In cooperation with The Pennsylvania State University and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC), Zeigler Brothers, Inc. conducted a study called "Trout Feed Evaluation: Integrating Waste Treatment Criteria." In the experiment, trout feed formulations were studied at Penn State's Rockspring Research Center. On March 23 697 rainbow trout raised during the study were donated to a PFBC Cooperative Nursery in Montour County. This study is one of many that have been conducted in order to preserve the nutrition content of Pennsylvania's farm-raised fish.

For more information, contact the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture at (717) 783-8462. For a free brochure or a trout cookbook, contact the U.S. Trout Farmers Association at (304) 728-2189.

New Soil Bacterial Disease Of Geraniums/Tomatoes

Eric Oesterling, from a talk by Dr. Seong-Hwan Kim at Mid Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Conference, Hershey, Pa.

I heard a very interesting talk at the Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Conference that I feel I need to share with vegetable growers in Pennsylvania.

Dr. Seong-Hwan Kim, plant pathologist supervisor at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, has identified a disease on greenhouse geranium cuttings that he fears could threaten tomatoes and potatoes in Pennsylvania fields.

It is a bacterial disease caused by *Ralstonia solanacearum* (= *Pseudomonas solanacearum*, = *Burkholderia solanacearum*). In April 1999, a Pennsylvania geranium grower lost 10-40 percent of seven different varieties of Guatemala-propagated geraniums because of *R. solanacearum*. This was the first occurrence of the disease in Pennsylvania.

In March 2000, one greenhouse lost a few plants of Michigan-propagated geraniums, and in April 2000, another greenhouse lost 20 percent of geraniums that were also from Michigan. More recently the disease has been discovered on geranium cuttings originating from Kenya.

The disturbing things about this disease are: It is caused by

a bacteria which attacks the roots and stem of not only geraniums, but also tomatoes, eggplants, and potatoes. It is possible that this strain of the bacteria can overwinter in Pennsylvania soils. Let me emphasize that to this point there is no evidence that the disease is established in Pennsylvania soils — it has been found only in greenhouses on geranium cuttings that came in from out of state or out of the country. The obvious concern is that the disease could move from geraniums to tomato transplants in the same greenhouse and then have infected tomatoes planted outdoors. As a soil-borne bacteria, it would be difficult to control in the field. Symptoms include yellowing and wilting of affected plants caused by a root rot. It does not cause leaf spots.

The geranium isolate of *R. solanacearum* found in Pennsylvania greenhouses belongs to the low temperature biotype, Biotype II/Race 3, which is a quarantine pest in Canada and Europe. Biotype II is the biotype usually found on potatoes or tomatoes in temperate climates (Hayward, A.C. 1976, In Proc. 1st International Conf. and Workshop on the Ecology and Control of Bact. Wilt Caused by *Pseudomonas solanacearum*. E. L. Sequeira and A. Kelman). All geranium isolates from both 1999 and

2000 were tested and found to be the low-temperature biotype, Biotype II (Kim, S.H. unpublished data).


Tomatoes and eggplants appear to be much more susceptible to the geranium isolates of *R. solanacearum* than are geraniums (Kim, S.H. unpublished data). Tomatoes and eggplants should not be grown in greenhouses with geraniums that were propagated in regions where Biotype II is known to occur (such as Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, Africa, and South America).

Further studies are needed. The bacteria should not be released near tomato and potato fields because Biotype II has the potential to be an invasive species that can survive outdoors in Pennsylvania. Once established, chemical control would be very difficult. Crop rotation away from tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants, and other solanaceous crops in a given field for at least two years would work to reduce or eliminate the bacteria in that field — as long as nightshade weeds were also eliminated.


If you encounter an unexplained wilt on geraniums (especially cuttings originating from out of the country), contact Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture plant inspectors or your Penn State extension agent with a background in horticulture.

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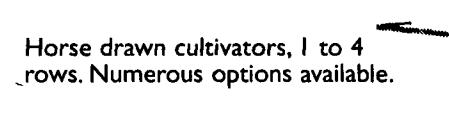
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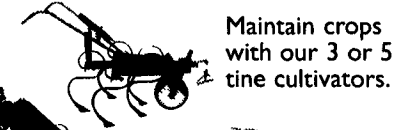
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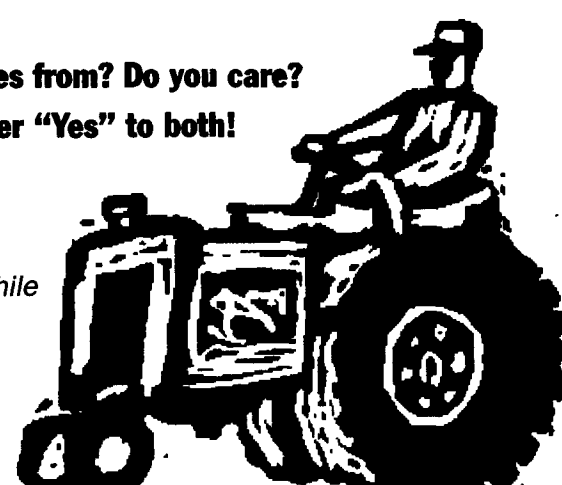


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