

Township Officials Learn About Legal Issues Of Ag Businesses

MICHELLE KUNJAPPU
Lancaster Farming Staff

STRASBURG (Lancaster Co.) — “We try to preserve a lot of farmland around here, but we try to preserve farms as well,” said Don Robinson, administrator, Lancaster County Conservation District (LCCD).

“There is no sense preserving the farm if we can’t preserve the farmer.”

Part of “preserving the farmer” is enabling producers to operate on-farm businesses. A meeting Monday evening at R Farm in Strasburg brought together county and township officials to discuss sideline or incidental businesses on the farm.

A picnic drew 130 people and the subsequent meeting drew 70

year, they can’t be sued unless there is a direct affect on health and safety,” according to Kellett. In addition, a farm can make a substantial change if the producer has a certified nutrient management plan.

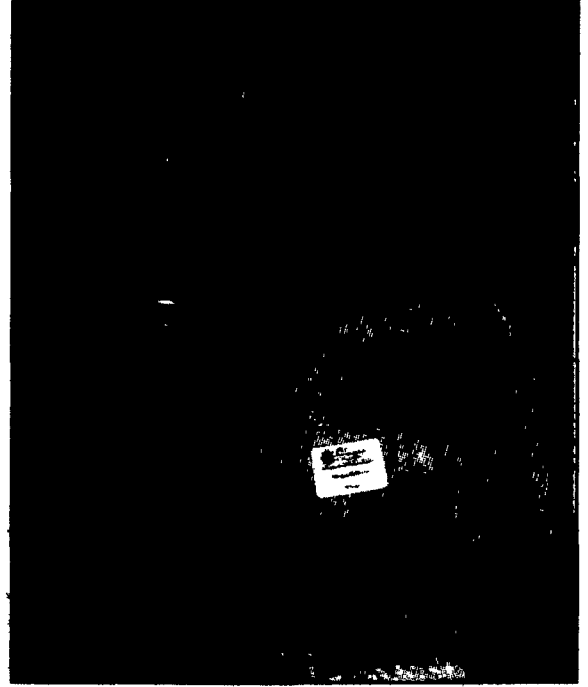
The law also allows direct marketing of products produced on the farm — despite zoning ordinances of the local community — if 50 percent of the goods sold are produced on the farm.

Putting signs out to advertise products is allowed on site. However “farmers are finding that if they’re down a road, they’d like to have the ability to put signs down the road to point customers in,” she said.

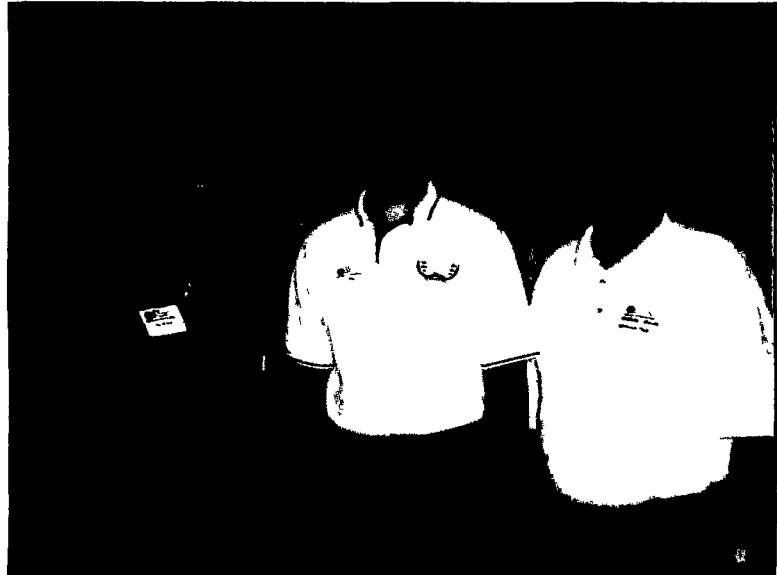
Township officials could look for ways to “write ordinances to



Christine Kellett, director of the Ag Law Research and Education Center, presented information on the legal issues of on-farm businesses.



Host Roger Rohrer introduces the farm, which includes a poultry operation and quilt and mulch businesses.



Les Houck, Salisbury Township supervisor; Lowell Fry, Rapho Township supervisor; and Frank Howe, Leacock Township supervisor discussed how their township handles farm businesses.

officials to have their questions answered on legal aspects of on-farm businesses.

The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce and the LCCD sponsored the evening.

Christine Kellett, director of the Penn State/Dickinson School of Law’s Ag Law Research and Education Center, presented ideas on “what officials can do to help keep farmers farming,” she said.

Kellett first discussed the “Right to Farm” Law, which “really isn’t a rights law. It was originally put together by legislators to protect farmers from nuisance ordinances and nuisance lawsuits,” said Kellett.

Under the law, “if a farmer has been farming the same way for a

help farmers, on a seasonal basis, guide customers to the farm,” she said.

A second law which helps farmers is the Ag Area Security Act. This law allows a landowner or group of landowners with 250 contiguous acres to petition the township to form an ag security area.

With this law, the owners are eligible for the conservation easement program, and allows the township to pass two-tier ordinances (less restrictions for ag operations).

Another helpful law is the preferential taxation put forth in the Clean and Green law, allowing farm and forest land to be taxed at a lower rate (“use value” as opposed to “fair market

value,” according to Kellett.)

The law allows a producer to use two acres toward direct sales of ag-related products, or for a rural enterprise.

Special-use or special-events permits granted by the township may be one way for farmers in easement plans to host such events as concerts, something that they cannot do if they are in the Clean and Green program.

Les Houck, Salisbury Township supervisor; Lowell Fry, Rapho Township supervisor; and Frank Howe, Leacock Township supervisor, discussed how their townships have handled sideline or incidental businesses.

Houck discussed how the township is allowing farmers to use small and outdated farm buildings, such as old chicken houses, for storage. Farmers may also rent out buildings to small businesses, he said.

Fry’s township allows business “as long as it is complimentary, incidental, and doesn’t interfere with normal farming practices,” he said. The township also allows landowners to rent out buildings — “small business incubators,” said Fry — to enterprises such as woodworking or lawn care.

Leacock Township, said Howe, is in the process of rewriting ordinances and is looking at allowing

ag-related business in the ag districts “for the pur-

pose of keeping farm families together,” he said.

One example is allowing businesses such as contractors that are based on the farm. As long as the business is fairly concealed on the farm, they are approved by the township, he said.

The evening also included an introduction to R Farm by Roger Rohrer. The 125-acre farm in-

cludes a 50,000-bird poultry operation and a mulch and quilt business.

Rohrer is employed with First Union National Bank as an ag lender. His wife, Kandy, is a full-time homemaker. She also operates a home-based business, “Kandy’s Quilts,” that produces and markets approximately 100 log cabin quilts each year.

They are joined by three children: Todd is the main operator of the farm, Mark is a milk hauler, and Ashlee will be a senior in high school.



Sallie Gregory, education coordinator for the LCCD, presents information about water to children attending Monday evening’s event.

Northern Bedford Wins State Judging Contest

LINDA WILLIAMS
Bedford Co. Correspondent
LOYSBURG (Bedford Co.) — Northern Bedford FFA’s dairy judging team emerged in first place during FFA Activities Week at Penn State.

Carissa Ebersole, a senior and Bedford County’s dairy princess, and Andrew Ritchey, a sophomore, 2003 graduate Jennifer Cogan, and Kenny Stanton, Everett, made up the winning team.

Jennifer and Michelle Clapper are also on the team. The six FFA members show dairy cattle at area fairs as well as dairy shows across the state.

FFA members judged on general knowledge, production records, dairy management practices, linear evaluation, and ranking of pedigrees. The event included a written exam as well as actual judging of several classes of Holstein and Jersey cows with the additional requirement of oral reasons for placement.

The team practiced judging with emphasis on linear evaluation at the Randy Huntsman farm at Martinsburg and also practiced at the Steven Ritchey farm. In addition, the members gained judging experience in a

spring event at Penn State and at the All-American Show in Harrisburg.

Ritchey finished third in individual judging and Stanton was sixth.

The winning team received a plaque and \$1,000 toward the cost of attending the national competition in Louisville in the fall.

Brittany Boyd, also of Northern Bedford, received a plaque and \$100 for her speech on the bald eagle. She received county area and regional accolades and qualified for state competition. She will be a sophomore at Northern Bedford.

A team from Northern Bedford composed of Trent Border, junior; Heather Sparks, senior; and Nicki Reasy, sophomore, competed in floriculture. Border earned silver. Sparks and Reasy each received a bronze medal.

Northern FFA members Tracy Carl, Mary Ann Musselman, Tracy Bupp, and Kaitlyn Eller also competed in horse selection. Tyler Hall competed in land judging.

FFA advisers at Northern are Kay Kring and James Over.



Brittany Boyd, an incoming Northern Bedford sophomore, won first place on the state FFA level in the junior prepared speech competition. Her topic was the bald eagle.

U.S. Hog, Pig Inventory Down

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. inventory of all hogs and pigs on June 1, 2003, was 58.7 million head. This was 3 percent below June 1, 2002, and 1 percent above March 1, 2003, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

• Breeding inventory, at 5.94 million head, was down 4 percent from June 1, 2002, and slightly below last quarter.

• Market hog inventory, at 52.8 million head, was 2 percent below last year and 1 percent above last quarter.

The March-May 2003 U.S. pig crop, at 25.1 million head, was 3 percent less than 2002, and 2 percent less than 2001. Sows farrowing during this period totaled 2.82 million head, 4 percent below last year. The sows farrowed during this quarter represented 47 percent of the breeding herd.

The average pigs per litter was 8.88 pigs saved per litter for the March-May 2003 period, compared to 8.82 last year. Pigs saved per litter by size of operation ranged from 7.60 for operations

with 1-99 hogs to 9.00 for operations with more than 5,000 hogs and pigs.

U.S. hog producers intend to have 2.83 million sows farrow during the June-August 2003 quarter, 2 percent below the actual farrowings during the same period in both 2002 and 2001. Intended farrowings for September-November 2003, at 2.79 million sows, are 1 percent below the same period in 2002, and 3 percent below 2001.

The total number of hogs under contract, owned by operations with over 5,000 head, but raised by contractees, accounted for 35 percent of the total U.S. hog inventory, up from 32 percent last year.

REVISIONS: All inventory and pig crop estimates for June 2002 through March 2003 were reviewed using final pig crop, official slaughter, death loss, import, and export data in U.S. level balance sheets. Based on the findings of this review, a slight adjustment of less than one-half percent was made to the March 1, 2003 inventory.