

Northampton County Farm Owners Attend Farmland Preservation Meeting

NAZARETH (Northampton Co.) — Farm owners are the architects of our county because the decisions they make with their land will impact what our county will look like. Is selling to developers the only option that farm owners have who are selling their land? About forty farm owners filled the Plainfield Township Building, April 3, to hear about other options.

Maria Bentzoni, the new administrator of Farmland Preservation in Northampton County, explained the process and the benefits of selling the development rights on your land. She emphasized that even after the sale of those rights, farm owners still own the land, are still responsible for it, and can one day sell it to an ever-increasing market.

The combination of funds received from Farmland Preservation plus the sale of the land often is more than what a developer will pay for the land. Depending on the location, soil type, and other criteria, there is a \$10,000 cap per acre that can be

paid in this program. The average price paid per acre is \$2,300.

Jeff Zahr, the Lehigh County administrator of Farmland Preservation spoke about Act 153, a little-known law that freezes school taxes on preserved agricultural land in a school district. Act 153 must be enacted by a local school board, with the advantage to them being that the land will not be developed. Residential development causes local taxes to increase with the need for increased essential services, such as police and fire protection, and increases in school taxes. The average cost to educate a single student is on average \$8,000 per year, while the average house pays a school tax of approximately \$2,000 per year. The \$6,000 deficit has to be made up somewhere. Only three Bucks Co. school districts have enacted Act 153 to date.

Bill Mineo, the director of the Lehigh-Delaware Heritage Corridor, stressed the importance of keeping the farmer profitable as the ultimate method of farmland preservation. Growing commodi-

ty crops, where the price for the harvest is dictated by the market, often leaves the farmer with a deficient return on their investment. Direct marketing, selling to large local companies and schools or directly to consumers at farmers markets, is a way to eliminate the middle-man. He emphasized the importance of keeping agriculture in Northampton County to maintain the pastoral beauty in Northampton County.

During the round table discussion phase of the meeting, specific questions from the farm owners were addressed about our local farmland preservation program. Similar programs are being planned in other townships around the County.

N.J. Foundation To Recognize Ag Teacher

BROADWAY, N.J. — The New Jersey FFA Foundation has announced the establishment of the Harry Schnieber Honorary Scholarship Endowment Fund and will kick off fundraising efforts Saturday, Sept. 20, at Warren Grange No. 110 Hall, located here at 6:30 pm.

Harry Schnieber, a well-known Belvidere resident, taught agriculture at Belvidere High School from 1939-1978. Schnieber not only built the agriculture program at Belvidere, but he literally built his own classroom by salvaging an old schoolhouse from across town.

He also planned and supervised the construction of the present classroom facility in 1975. With a beginning enrollment of 19 students, his classes grew to an annual enrollment of

Ag Educators, Young Farmers To Host Conference July 7-10

DOYLESTOWN (Bucks Co.) — The Pennsylvania Association of Agricultural Educators and the Pennsylvania Young Farmers Association are hosting the 2003 Agricultural Education Conference at Delaware Valley College in Doylestown during the week of July 7-10.

This conference will also include other agricultural educators from the states affiliated with the National Association of Agricultural Educators, (NAAE) for Region VI, (Mid Atlantic and New England States) as well as the American Association for Agricultural Education, (AAAE) and the National Association, Supervisors of Agricultural Education, (NASAE).

The Tuesday, July 8 banquet will feature Secretary of Agriculture Dennis Wolff as well a keynote address from Dr. Dennis Avery, director, Center for Global Food Issues.

Avery is a former agricultural analyst for the United States Department of State and is a staff member of the President's National Advisory Commission for Food and Fiber.

He is also the editor of the "Global and Food Quarterly" and is the author of a number of books including "Saving the Planet with Pesticides and Plastics."

Avery has testified before Congress and has appeared on most of the nation's major television networks.

to farm and operates Stoneyfield Orchards in Belvidere.

The New Jersey FFA Foundation, Inc. also is searching for former students to share in this special recognition event on Sept. 20. Former students and friends who are interested in taking part, or anyone else who needs directions or more information on this project, should contact New Jersey FFA Foundation, Inc. Treasurer Michael Iannitelli at (908) 213-9722.

Those interested in making a contribution can send a tax-deductible donation to the Harry Schnieber Honorary Scholarship Endowment Fund, New Jersey FFA Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 237, Belvidere, NJ 07823.

USDA Begins Sign-Up For New Crop Disaster Program

WASHINGTON, D. C. — Sign-up for the USDA's Crop Disaster Program (CDP) for the 2001 or 2002 crop began Friday, June 6. The closing date for sign-up will be announced at a later date, but producers will be given ample opportunity to complete the process.

Payments for CDP are authorized by the Agricultural Assistance Act of 2003, signed into law on Feb. 20, 2003, to provide some \$2 billion in aid for producers suffering from natural disasters. The CDP has no funding limitation but each producer is limited to \$80,000.

Under CDP, producers will be reimbursed for qualifying crop production and quality losses to crops (other than sugar cane, sugar beets or tobacco) for either the 2001 or 2002 crops.

Payments will be issued for losses exceeding 35 percent of expected production at 50 percent of the established price for crops that were covered by crop insurance, 50 percent of the estab-

lished price for crops for which crop insurance was not available, and 45 percent of the established price to producers for crops that could have been insured but were not.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) has developed a Website that provides producers with one convenient location for details on new and existing disaster assistance. The Website can be accessed at <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov>.

For more information about CDP and other disaster assistance, contact or visit local county FSA offices or USDA Service Centers.

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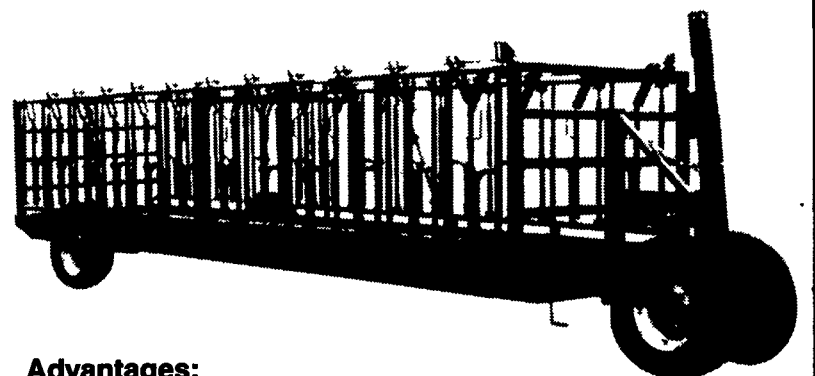
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