

Agriculture Insights



The Lancaster Chamber
of Commerce & Industry

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LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND AGRICULTURE

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Agriculture and Lancaster County have been so intricately tied together, it is hard for us to imagine a Lancaster County without our rolling farms. However, for those who think they are in a cozy cocoon where farms

and farming practices will always be protected, allowed and understood, the winds of change are blowing.

Local municipalities are becoming increasingly involved in regulating, controlling, and restricting agriculture. Being involved in what is happening at your local township is vitally important to the future of your farm and the generations to come.

The regulations being imple-

mented today will have a profound impact on the future direction of farming. Local governments that restrict agriculture are becoming more common than ever before. Even in some of our most rural areas, agriculture is becoming a target of a new wave of restrictive ordinances being purported by groups and individuals without a full understanding of modern farms.

We in agriculture recognize that we are faced with challenges that require innovative changes to allow our farms to stay competitive in the marketplace. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that those around us may not know the needs of a competitive modern farming operation. Public perceptions have been shaped by historical views of the proverbial "Old McDonald Farm."

We must be willing to be actively involved in our commu-

nities, communicating agriculture to those around us who are unfamiliar with farming operations and the value they bring to our society by providing a safe and secure source of food to our local, national, and global communities.

We must also stay tuned to the actions of our local municipalities. As ordinances are updated and changed, many have been fraught with unreasonable and extremely restrictive regulations that prevent or substantially hinder agriculture and the future growth of it. Extremely large setbacks, odor emissions, water usage, and even ownership structure have all been issues that have come up recently in local township ordinances.

Many times no one in agriculture is involved or providing feedback in the process. Therefore, we in agriculture must answer the call to protect what we hold on to.

If you encounter a proposed ordinance in your township that is unfairly restrictive of agriculture, a good place to start is your local county conservation district. Shelly Dehoff, agriculture/public liaison for the Pennsylvania Conservation Districts, is able to provide effective assistance in navigating the complexities of some of these proposed ordinances.

She can be reached at (717) 808-0848.

Other agriculture associations such as The Farm Bureau, Penn Ag Association, and The Lancaster Chamber Ag Program are active in assisting in these areas.

The Lancaster Chamber recently conducted a symposium with township officials from all over the county to discuss and promote agriculture friendly planning. For more information on The Lancaster Chamber's Agriculture Program, visit www.lancasterchamber.com/ag.

Wolff To Create Dairy Task Force

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — In an effort to improve the competitive position of the state's dairy farmers, on Thursday Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Dennis C. Wolff announced that he will form a statewide Dairy Task Force to review and strengthen Pennsylvania's dairy industry.

Wolff, a dairy farmer, said that Pennsylvania's dairy industry is the largest segment of Pennsylvania agriculture, and its success is critical to the economic health of the state's economy. However, he said the industry has been experiencing a 25-year low on dairy prices.

"Launching this initiative now is important because of the current milk price concerns and the troubling dairy farm trend lines," Wolff said while announcing the task force at a meeting of the Dairy Farmers of American Northeast Area Council and

Dairyalea Cooperative Board of Directors in Wilkes-Barre.

"Pennsylvania needs its 9,000 dairy farms. We simply cannot permit this trend to continue. I want to work with this Task Force to explore what the industry and the Department can do to stem the decline in dairy farms.

"Pennsylvania is the fourth largest dairy producing state, and we want to grow the industry, not shrink it. To do this will require the collective efforts of all of us — government, industry and consumers. We have the right ingredients for success — productive, hard-working farm families, a strong animal genetic base, fertile soil, a supportive state government, cooperative extension service, a diversified agribusiness community, food processors, and 12 million consumers. We need to leverage our strengths and cooperate to advance the dairy industry."

Wolff said the Dairy Task Force will be comprised of dairy producers, education and agriculture organizations, state and federal government agencies, and other industry stakeholders. It will develop a Dairy Action Plan that will address the social and economic issues facing Pennsylvania's dairy industry and our rural communities.

"The Rendell administration believes that the future of dairy farming in Pennsylvania depends on the decisions that will be made in the next several years," Wolff said. "The Dairy Action Plan will focus on increasing cooperation between farmers and various farming interests, and enabling them to work toward goals mutually beneficial to the industry and the commonwealth."

Wolff said the plan includes the establishment of a Dairy Assistance Program to coach farmers on ways

to increase efficiency and profitability. The Dairy Task Force also will work with government agencies to offer economic development incentives, loans, and grants for Pennsylvania dairy farms. It also will build upon

existing programs by such organizations as the Dairy Stakeholders, Professional Dairy Managers, and the Dairy Alliance.

The Dairy Task Force is expected to conduct its first meeting in early August.

Ohio Field Day Aug. 6

BOWLING GREEN, Ohio — Get the scoop on the latest in the green industry at an upcoming Ohio State University Extension-sponsored field day.

The 6th annual Northwest Ohio Summer Field Day will be conducted Aug. 6 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Fire Science and Law Building on the Owens Community College campus in Bowling Green, Ohio.

"The event is geared for those working in the (green) industry. Past participants have worked in garden centers and greenhouses; maintained turf, trees and landscapes; or served

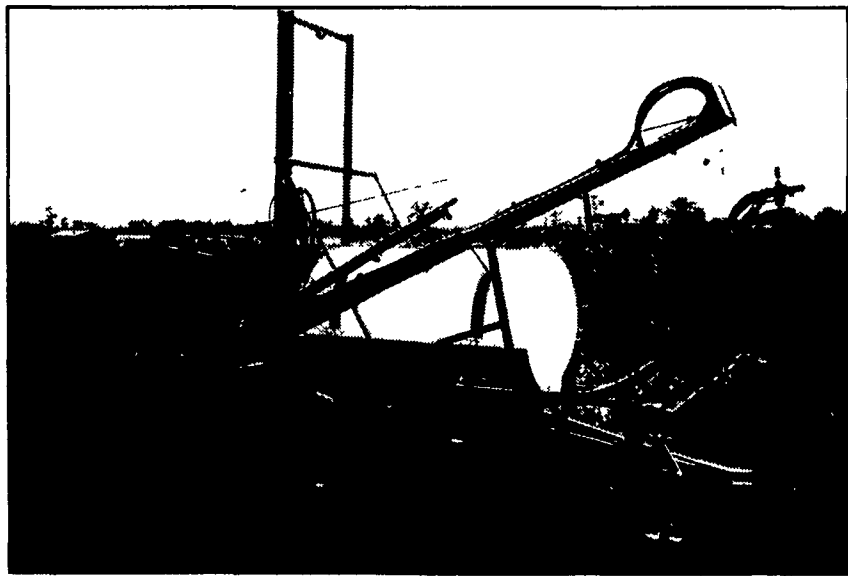
as members on tree commissions or other volunteer organizations like the Ohio State University (OSU) Extension Master Gardener Program," said Amy Stone, consumer and urban horticulture Extension agent in Lucas County.

This year the field day will offer 16 concurrent landscape, garden center, arboriculture and turf-care educational sessions presented by local industry professionals and OSU Extension staff from across the state.

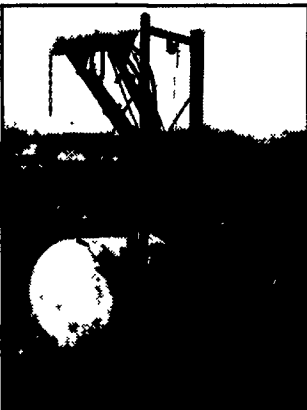
For more information, contact Amy Stone at (800) 358-4678 or stonea@ag.osu.edu.



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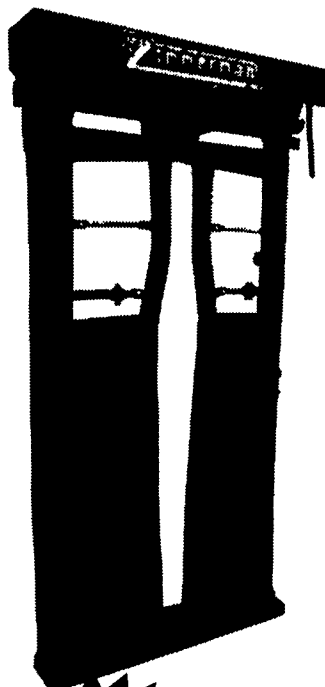


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