Local Food On Campus: Farmers, Colleges Collaborate

(Continued from Page A1)

This past year, the Pennsylvania Association For Sustainable Agriculture (PASA) kicked off a Farm-to-College program to link farmers and college food service programs across the state.

Heather House, program coordinator, hosted a meeting of farmers and college food directors this week at West Chester University. A total of about 40 people attended the meeting. Food purchasers were on hand from a number of institutions, including Millersville University, West Chester University, Muhlenburg College, Ursinus College, and Swarthmore.

House discussed some farm-tocollege projects she has been working on, including one at Slippery Rock University, Butler County, where she earned a master's degree this past spring.

While a student in the Sustainable Systems Program, House coordinated a relationship between local farmers and AR-AMARK, Slippery Rock University's food service supplier.

ARAMARK agreed to buy at least 10 percent of the food served at the university from local farmers.

Seven area farmers formed a cooperative to provide the food for the university. Logistics were worked out between ARAMARK and the farmers.

"A lot of excitement was generated from that," House

There were obstacles to overcome and a lot of learning in the process.

"The very first (local) order we got had slugs in the lettuce," House said. "It was exactly what had to go wrong for us to become committed to the project.

According to House, the program was working well until recently, when ARAMARK lost the university's food service contract. At this point, it will likely take some time for the university to adjust to a new food provider before trying to buy local again, House said.

Farmers at the meeting assured food directors that the products they sell are high quali-



College food purchasers meet with farmers to discuss local food buying options.

ty, safe, and can be delivered to the satisfaction of the college.

Jim Stauffer, beef producer and direct-marketer from Lancaster, said that all of his beef can be "source-verified" because calves are raised on the farm and the finished cattle are processed at a local facility.

William Lesher, dairyman and milk bottler from Way-Har Farms, Berk County, said that on-farm processors are subject to the same regulations as large processors.

"We're inspected with the same laws that apply to the biggest dairy in the country," Lesher said.

Lesher said his advantage is in providing a fresher product.

"It's in the cow today and it's in your cooler tomorrow," he said.

House noted ways that colleges can benefit from buying local. Students tend to like the food. Also, good public relations are generated by the college supporting the local economy.

Other schools that are developing farm-to-college markets are Pennsylvania College of Technology in Williamsport and Allegheny College in the northwest part of the state

The Pennsylvania College of Technology conducted student taste tests comparing milk from a typical university supplier with milk from Milky Way Farms, a dairy farm and bottling operation in Bradford County. Students preferred the milk that came straight from the farm, and boosted their consumption by 30 percent, according to House.

House urged farmers to develop relationships with food directors and staff, and be professional, organized and reliable.

One way to get started, House said, is that farmers can introduce themselves to a food service director and share product samples. They can plan a local food dinner on the campus, feature a local product once a week during harvest, or conduct comparison taste tests.

"Make a commitment and be patient," House said.

House recommended "making a fuss" about local products, getting students excited so that the idea of local food "permeates the culture of the university."

Farmers interested in direct marketing should also make sure they are listed on the Website www.localharvest.org, a resource for purchasers looking for local products. Scott Bailey, food purchasing manager at Millersville University, coordinates occasional events on campus featuring local food, and is interested in buying more from area farmers.

Educational institutions are reliable customers, he told farmers at the meeting.

"College food services tend to pay their bills, where if you sell to restaurants, you're rolling the dice," Bailey said.

Kassab of Swarthmore noted that college food purchasers do not base their buying decisions on price alone. Quality and timeliness of delivery are also considerations, she said.



compact tractor features increased horsepower (22 PTO HP), heavy-duty construction and easy operation for nursery work, light construction and farm chores. Powered by a quiet-and-clean Kubota E-TVCS diesel engine, the B2910 Premier 'Plus' features deluxe cruise control, high-performance power steering and increased hydraulic power.

The B2910 has an adjustable deluxe seat and a backlit instrument panel for easy day/night monitoring. Three-speed ranges, a dual pump hydraulic system and rear and mid PTO are standard.

A powerful Category I, 3-point hitch handles a variety of performance-matched implements. For greater lift capacity, the performance-matched LA402 loader is easy to operate and is compatible with either 60" or 72" mid-mount mower.

For a rugged, powerful tractor that works as hard as you do, see the Kubota B2910.

Kubota

YOUR FULL LINE KUBOTA PRODUCT HEADQUARTERS
• INVENTORY • PRICE • KNOWLEDGEABLE SALES STAFF
• SERVICE EXPERIENCE

Our Lancaster Kubota Dealership is MOVING to a NEW LOCATION!

Effective Dec. 1st, we will be operating out of: Hollinger's Sport 'N Turf, 4126 Oregon Pike,

Ephrata, PA 17522. (Just off the Brownstown exit of Rt. 222) We can now be reached at **717-859-5455** STOP IN AND SEE US THERE!



We Ship Parts

LEBANON

Rt #7, Box 405

Lebanon, PA 17042

Rt 419 1 mile West

of Schaefferstown

717-949-2000

Or TOLL FREE

1-877-4Kubota

(458-2682)

KELLER BROS

Financing Or Cash
Discounts
Available

TRACTORS & FOLIRATAIN

TRACTORS & EQUIPMENT

MONDAY - FRIDAY 8:00 - 5:00 SATURDAY 8:00 - 12:00

Serving Central PA Since 1921

PILOTSI KELLER BROS AIRPORT 2550 RUNWAY 600 From Jealership 4126 Oregon Pike, Ephrata PA 17522 Just off Brownstown Exit of 222 on Rt 272

Call For Details

On Leasing

EPHRATA

717-859-5455 Or Toll Free 877-3Kubota (358-2682)

Visit our web site at www.kubntaparts.com • E-mail us at kubota@nbn.net



Heather House coordinates farm-to-college food marketing. *Photos by Dave Lefever*



"The Freshest Water on the Trail"

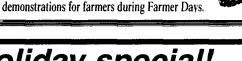
Pools • Power Washing • Wells • Cisterns Stainless Steel Water Truck Rentals 24 hours a day • 8 days a week

Conestoga Water Wagon
P.O. Box 31
Conestoga, PA 17516
717/629-2756

FARM SHOW 2004

What a treat we have in store for the annual *Lancaster Farming* issue of Farm Show!

Scheduled for the Jan. 10 issue: features from farmers who are going to the winter agricultural showcase event at the Farm Show Complex and their experiences in attending the great event in Harrisburg. Also scheduled: the annual FFA Keystone Degree winners and a complete schedule of events, including the many





Holiday special! Start saving on all your holiday family long

distance calls before 12-31-2003 and get a free Touchtone, Caller ID, Memory dial Telephone!*

4.9¢ Long Distance Service

4.9¢ per minute, first minute, every minute, in your state, and in all 48 states. 6 second billing Call JDS Telecom 1-888-315-1179

*Minimum service usage required, cannot be combined with other promotional offers