

Weekly Dairy Market Outlook

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The next part of my assignment was spent with a one-year old milk cooperative called Jav-lacta. They are located in Southern Moldova, where milk production is less common. The co-op manager, Ms. Maria Culesov, is well educated, articulate, and has very good business and computer skills. My job was to help her develop a strong business plan for this new and fragile cooperative.

It was clear that Ms. Culesov was both excited about their future prospects and frustrated by all the setbacks they had experienced during the past 12 months. There are expectations in Moldova that any new business should start immediately with large profits. Also, the many villagers think about making money today, not tomorrow, making the concept of investment difficult.

But cooperatives only work if farmers are willing to invest together in a new business. Thus the concept of a cooperative is very new and strange to the villagers. Part of Ms. Culesov's role is to educate the villagers about production issues and cooperatives, and to help them contribute to a new form of business that they can all participate in.

Part of my role as a CNFA vol-

unteer is to provide these fledgling co-op leaders a bit of encouragement. I did what I could to help Ms. Culesov. I was very impressed with her business savvy and leadership skills. I explained that it will take time for the villagers to understand what a cooperative is all about.

I also explained that the cooperative leader is someone who has no friends. Her role is to be tough and business-minded, and that she had a tremendous responsibility to all the members. There is no school or classes that can teach her all that she will need to learn. I also said I was confident that she was going to be very successful in her new role.

The Moldovan economy is slowly trying to recover from the events of the past 10 years. Agriculture is an important economic base for the country and that's why CNFA is focusing their American volunteers on this sector of the economy. It provides jobs and economic activity for those villagers who want to stay home and work. It is also very encouraging for me to see strong, well-educated leaders such as Visillii Gheorghita and Ms. Culesov. Also, it is rewarding to see new, fledgling cooperatives making economic progress in a very short period of time.



Lancaster Farming

OPINION

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According to the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, Verns Moses Lake Meats, Moses Lake, Wash., is recalling 10,410 pounds of raw beef that may have been exposed to tissues containing the infectious agent that causes BSE, which has a dangerous link to transmissible spongiform encephalopathies. That includes the family of human illnesses, a variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD), which is believed to be caused by eating tissue from BSE-affected cattle.

U.S. Ag Secretary Ann M. Veneman was quick to respond to the news. "Despite this finding, we remain confident in the safety of our beef supply," Veneman said. "The risk to human health from BSE is extremely low."

Since 1990 the USDA has had an aggressive surveillance program in place to ensure detection and a swift response plan to be used if BSE is identified in the U.S.

In 2003, Veneman noted USDA has tested 20,526 head of cattle for BSE, triple the level of 2002. The surveillance program is aggressive. We commend them for that.

But USDA needs to put ALL of its resources toward eliminating the threat now. They need to impose harsher and stiffer penalties on those selling or feeding ruminant animal feed.

Perhaps more importantly, the issue is going to become one where the consumer will actively seek out those producers they can trust. According to crop manager and beef producer Matt Balliet, in the "Making An Impact" series we continue this week in the newspaper, freezer beef demand is exceeding some farmers' ability to be able to supply. Consumers want safe food, and they want to know where it's coming from.

Now with this, demand from consumers for a safe product could skyrocket.

We'll see.



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existing authority by townships to regulate agriculture are just not true.

Farmers can't operate under a patchwork of separate laws and regulations that could be adopted in 1,450 townships. Some farms even cross township boundaries. If this were allowed to continue, Pennsylvania would stand alone among states by allowing an action so destructive to its agriculture.

Beyond our existing farmers, picture how the matter affects their sons and daughters, who may be thinking about staying on the farm (and who are already too few in number). Farmers, young and old, have confidence that state and federal lawmakers will deal with agriculture fairly and responsibly over the long term. But many won't risk their investment and future if they know that a few local officials — often reacting to unfounded fears rather than facts — can make up regulations that go far beyond state and federal laws.

Those who support and defend illegal township farm ordinances portray the regulations as reasonable oversight of large farms. The commonwealth already has stringent environmental safeguards which are among the most restrictive in the nation. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau will never defend willful violations of laws governing agriculture, and we continually work with agencies and lawmakers to ensure that laws are up to date.

Farm families are counting on Governor Rendell to remove the dark clouds gathering over Pennsylvania's agriculture by signing the legislation.

— Guy F. Donaldson
Pa. Farm Bureau
Camp Hill

National Farmers Union Opposes CAFTA

WASHINGTON, D.C. — National Farmers Union criticized the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), which it believes will adversely impact domestic producers of sugar, fruit, vegetable, dairy, and other commodities.

"The CAFTA agreement offers few benefits to American agriculture producers," said NFU Presi-

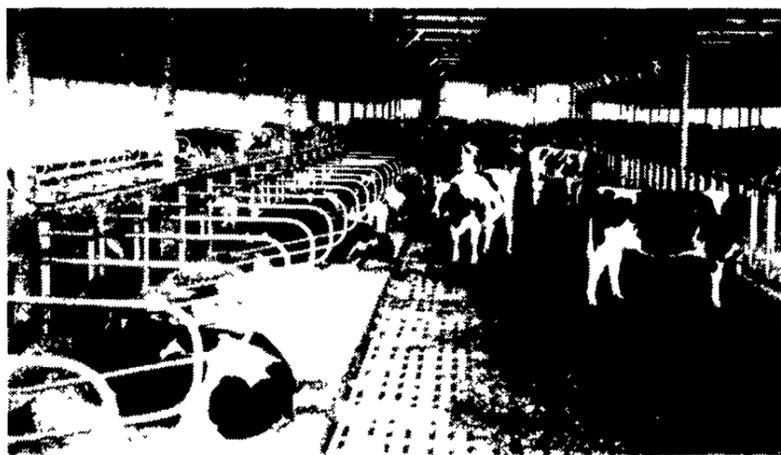
dent Dave Frederickson. "CAFTA countries represent a relatively small market of approximately 31 million people with limited resources that can be used for the purchase of agricultural products. Additional market access and tariff relief for a few U.S. products will not offset the negative impact of increased imports from these CAFTA countries."

Frederickson said that in 2003, U.S. agricultural trade deficit with the four CAFTA countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua) was about \$300 million, representing nearly one-third of U.S. agricultural exports to those countries. If Costa Rica joins the agreement, he said the trade deficit grows to more than \$900 million and equals

nearly 80 percent of the United States' exports to the five nations.

"The CAFTA agreement offers little prospect that the trade deficit with these countries will be reversed and resembles failed trade policies of the past," the farm leader said. "The CAFTA further encourages a race to the bottom for producer prices and fails to address major issues that distort fair trade."

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