

Michigan Farm News

Rural Living

September 1982



A Publication of the Michigan Farm Bureau
County Newsletter Inside

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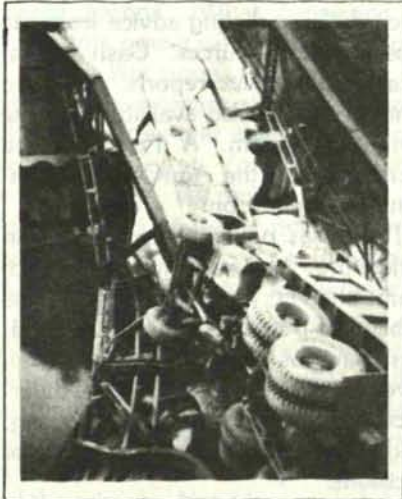
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A Publication of the Michigan Farm Bureau

September 1982
Volume 61, Number 9



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AgriCom - A Technological Advantage

Satellite dish, telephone modem, on-farm computers and videotext are terms that were unknown to most farmers five years ago but are now starting to be used throughout Farm Bureau daily. The reason is the AgriCom project which is being expanded from a pilot program to a commercial service to members.

When the MFB board of directors discussed the expansion of this program in July of this year, I felt a sense of pride in our organization for stepping out to serve the needs of members. The AgriCom program is truly one to help farmers make their future more secure and profitable.

AgriCom has not come about easily or quickly. Its roots can be traced to the policy set by Farm Bureau members several decades ago. In the 1960s, fruit and vegetable farmers were looking to their organization for assistance in the area of marketing. To meet that need, the organization of marketing associations was pursued.

Here in Michigan, the Michigan Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Association (MACMA) was started to assist farmers in their marketing and bargaining efforts. As a part of the American Agricultural Marketing Association, MACMA joined with other marketing associations from other states. The results of these marketing efforts have delivered millions of dollars of income to members, primarily producers of fruit and vegetables.

However, marketing needs of other major commodities - grain, beans and livestock - continued. Another Farm Bureau affiliate, Michigan Elevator Exchange, serves farmers in marketing their grains and dry beans. However, Farm Bureau's Young Farmers, state commodity advisory committee members and others have requested more assistance. They desired marketing information and education for farmers who must decide when and how they should market their commodities, or



purchase feed for livestock, in order to have a more profitable farm business.

Marketing information and education - these are two strong areas of Farm Bureau.

In surveying farmers, an American Farm Bureau-sponsored research study learned that farmers felt marketing information was too late to help them make good decisions. Newsletters were days old. Information in newspapers was at least one day old. Radio reported what happened hours before but farmers often missed these reports. Buyers of agricultural products, on the other hand, seemed to have methods of obtaining more current information than did farmers.

Staff of the research firm conducting the study analyzed modern communications technology. They, along with AFBF, put together a package combining computers, satellites, telephone and television sets. This combination allows a farmer to have information only minutes old. The futures market, as an example, is updated on the AgriCom system every 10 minutes during the trading day. This timely, useful information gives farmers an advantage.

AFBF and the Illinois Farm Bureau

took a leadership role in developing the on-farm computer program. They also hired a very competent staff to secure, analyze and interpret information needed by farmers. This quality staff is the key to a successful program. In fact, Illinois Farm Bureau's Agri-Visor service has an excellent track record in advising farmers for several years and keeping them in the top third of the market.

In Michigan, we too have a quality staff. We are obtaining weekly and twice daily marketing advice from the most reliable sources. Cash prices, weather, legislative reports, news and other items are also available with the computer system. A Farm Bureau member using the AgriCom information can depend on it.

There has never been certainty in agriculture. As government farm programs change, there may be even less stability of prices for agriculture products than has been in the past. I believe decision making will be the difference in making a profit in farming. And good information is needed for decisions.

I believe the action of the board of directors to establish the AgriCom project on a self sustaining financial basis as a service to farmer-members is a good decision. I encourage Farm Bureau members to learn more about this program. It may be the wisest decision made on the farm this year.

Elton R. Smith

President
Michigan Farm Bureau

If you have a question or opinion that you would like to share in Rural Route, send it to Rural Living Magazine, Michigan Farm Bureau, P.O. Box 30960, Lansing, Mich. 48909.

A Tough Lesson

In the next several months, you're going to be hearing a lot about "in your own words" and "YOU make it happen." That's what Farm Bureau is all about. You, in your own words, help write the policies that guide our organization and then you help make it happen when you take action to execute those policies.

Part of my job involves working with representatives of the news media. Once these people get to know and trust me, a common question arises: "Off the record, is Farm Bureau REALLY a grassroots organization?" I wouldn't give these people a bum steer or a snow job for anything in the world, so I'm grateful to be able to give, from years of witnessing the power of the membership, an unqualified "YES!" response.

I've got to tell you members, though that you've shaken my confidence a bit in your "you make it happen" power, and I'm not looking forward to the question from my news media friends: "What happened to your organization's grassroots power during the primary?"

It was five years ago that you, "in your own words," directed your organization to develop a PAC, a political action committee that would give farmers, at long last, some real political clout. You charged your AgriPac to study the voting records, the philosophy and awareness of the importance of agriculture by political candidates, endorse those who met the stiff criteria for designation as "Friends of Agriculture" and give you guidance in the election process.

In the 1978 and 1980 elections, you made it happen and AgriPac scored big. Political candidates began to recognize what we already knew - that while overall voter turnout might be a weak 25%, farmers could claim a powerful 50%.

This primary election was a crucial one and AgriPac endorsed 79 "Friends of Agriculture." Of those 79, 66 survived the primary. Not a bad record, but the "friends" who lost were big losses for the agricultural community.

It would be easy - and more comfortable - to blame it on the number of candidates, redistricting, the large turnout of voters in labor-oriented, metro areas. But, if we're honest, the real blame has to lie with Farm Bureau members who failed to "make it happen." They didn't have enough faith in what they had asked for "in their own words." They diluted their potential power by dividing their votes instead of standing together in strong support behind designated "Friends of Agriculture."

It's too late to cry over spilled milk, but not too late to learn a valuable lesson from organized labor. They had the disciplined unity that we've illustrated we do not yet have, a unity that spells power in the political arena.

Hopefully, we'll prove we learned from that lesson by making it happen for our "Friends of Agriculture" in the general election.

Friends and readers may wish to send cards or messages to Donna wishing her a speedy recovery from recent surgery. Send care of Rural Living magazine.

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The Michigan Legislature returned Aug. 30 to begin the fall session and consider numerous issues pending in committees and on the floor of both the Senate and House. This will be a "lame duck" session as many legislators, along with the governor and other leadership, will not be returning for the 1983 session. Some of the issues to be debated include:

Budget - The appropriations committees are working on the 1982-83 budget which takes effect on Oct. 1, 1982. The outlook is dim, with major cuts expected. These will include further cuts in state aid to schools which in turn puts greater pressure on schools to seek increased property taxes. Agricultural programs will also face further cuts as will practically every other division of government.

There appears to be no end to Michigan's economic problems. Another \$100 million or more is expected to be cut by executive order from the present year's budget which ends Sept. 30. Most of this will probably come from state aid to schools. Schools are not likely to receive the Oct. 1 state aid payment which makes "payless pay-days" in some districts a distinct possibility.

Since 1980, Michigan has used its "rainy day" or emergency fund of \$263.7 million, adjusted its books by \$282 million, cut spending by over \$800 million and raised taxes by \$300 million because Michigan's constitution requires a balanced budget. The increased income tax which took effect on April 1, 1982 automatically expires on Sept. 30.

The budget cuts are even more significant when it is recognized that costs continue to rise; however, inflation has dropped considerably since 1980. There is some better news as welfare case loads have declined. This is not due to an improving economy, but instead to much stricter requirements.

Unemployment Compensation - This has been a major issue for some time, but the Legislature has not addressed it. It is estimated that Michigan's debt to the federal government

will be as much as \$2.7 billion by the end of this year.

While most of the debt has been incurred by unemployment in the auto and related industries, every employer, including farmers, will have to help pay the debt. Penalties plus interest will soon take effect. They will amount to \$18 per employee and increase another \$18 each year per employee for the next nine years. At that time, the total additional cost per employee per year will be \$162 just to pay off the present federal debt.

Several reforms were achieved in 1980, but benefits were also greatly increased. Legislative proposals that are pending include: require a waiting week before unemployment compensation is available, increase the present 18 weeks to qualify to 20 weeks, and raise the tax base from \$6,000 to \$7,000 along with other reforms that are being considered.

Transportation - Highway use tax revenues continue to decline (down 27% for the first three months of 1982) and repair costs continue to increase by 10 to 15% per year. Roads and bridges continue to deteriorate at an increasing rate.

Several bills are in a House committee that would, in effect, raise the gas tax 2 cents per gallon; increase automobile weight taxes 15%; increase commercial and truck weight taxes 30%; index the rates; and maintain the present constitutional "90-10" allocation limits. The legislation would automatically expire in 1987. Most states have either raised the highway user taxes or are considering doing so. Thirty-two states raised highway taxes in 1981 and seven so far in 1982, including Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

There are also serious problems caused by the loss of railroad services to several rural areas in the state that affect grain elevators, fertilizer plants and other agricultural businesses. Railroad subsidies end Sept. 30 if they are included in the 1982-83 budget.

Uniform Commercial Code - Farm Bureau is still working on legisla-

tion (H.B. 5591) to eliminate the problem of elevators, farmers and other buyers of farm products having to pay the lender a second time in cases where there is a lien on the commodity. The legislation would set up a state reporting service for use by elevators and other buyers and would exempt farmers, to some degree, who buy such commodities for their own use. The lending businesses would file such information with the state computer program so that buyers could call to determine if a lien is on the property. Such liens are presently recorded in the county, but with modern transportation and business methods is no longer effective.

Right to Farm - The Right to Farm law was signed into law over a year ago, on July 11, 1982. The final guidelines were approved by the Agricultural Commission on April 14, 1982. The Oakland County Circuit Court ruled that the law is constitutional and the guidelines adequate on April 21, 1982.

The MDA has published a representative sample of inquiries since the court ruling. Farm Bureau has also had numerous inquiries. Some of these include:

- A Kent County dairy farmer cited by a petition of 80 residents on noise and odor. The Extension director used the law and guidelines to defuse the situation.

- A Livingston County veal calf operation was threatened with a suit by the township because odor from a manure holding tank. The farmer gave copies of the law and guidelines to local officials. No further action up to this time.

- Five Clinton County farmers were required to obtain a permit to operate because of non-compliance with a local ordinance governing hours of operation. The permit requirement was discontinued after local officials were informed of the law.

- A Monroe County police chief was petitioned by 300 residents objecting to dust created by planting a large field. He used the law to quiet the objections.

In addition to dozens of farmer requests, at least two dozen lawyers have requested information.

A provision is being recommended as part of the revised Subdivision Control Act to require a statement on each parcel deed as follows: "This land is adjacent to property utilized for agricultural purposes and, therefore, residents may be subject to inconvenience or discomfort arising from agricultural operations which are protected by Public Act 93, 1981 (Right to Farm)."

Construction Code - A Farm Bureau member in southeastern Michigan was told by a local building inspector that he could not build a pole barn machine shed and use a small portion of it to sell his own produce to the public unless it was built to "commercial specifications" and provided with a cement drive and curb. The member turned to Farm Bureau for help.

A meeting was arranged between the local officials, the head of the state building code inspectors, and Farm Bureau staff. The state official made it clear that under state law, farm buildings are exempt from the state building code except for the portion used for retail purposes, and that a local building code cannot supercede the state code. Farm Bureau gained this exemption a few years ago in the Legislature and won it again this past year when there was a strong attempt to repeal the exemption. Many farmers, however, have had problems with local officials.

Lansing Review is prepared by Robert Smith, MFB senior legislative counsel.

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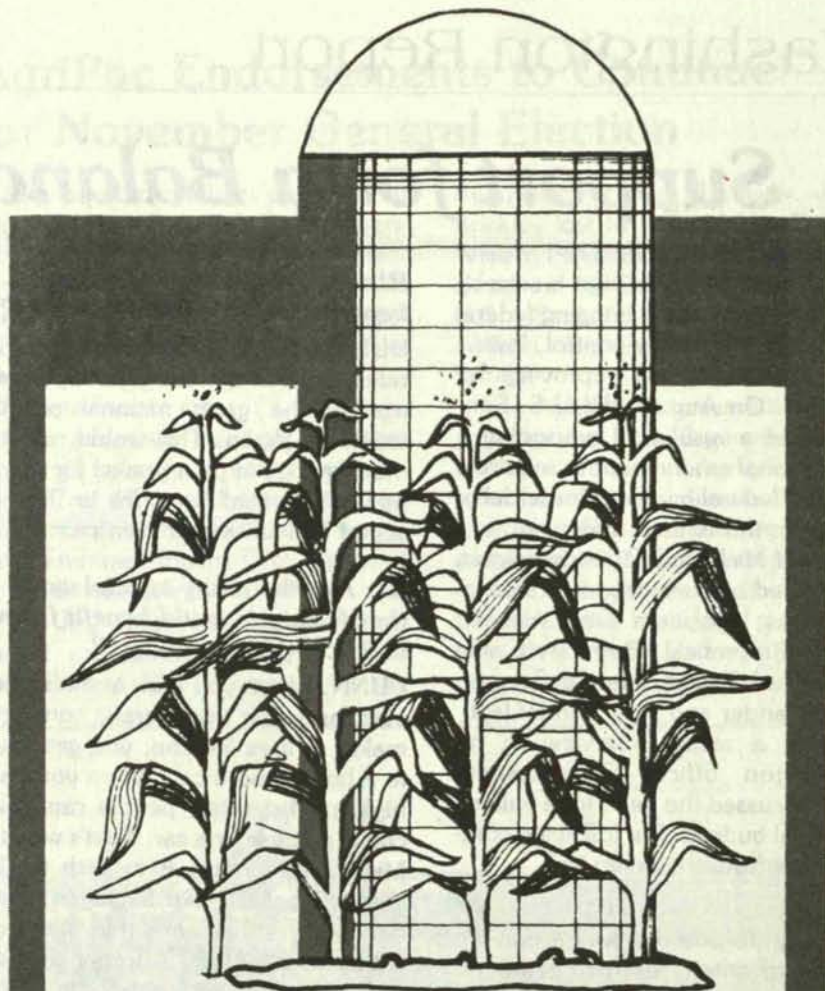


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Support for a Balanced Budget

A balanced federal budget is seen by many as an answer to bringing federal deficit spending under control, lowering interest rates and improving the economy. On Aug. 4, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution supporting a constitutional amendment to require a balanced federal budget. House deliberation on this issue is underway.

Eight of Michigan's 21 congressmen have joined as co-sponsors of balanced budget legislation: Don Albosta, William Broomfield, Bob Davis, Jim Dunn, Carl Pursell, Harold Sawyer, Mark Siljander and Guy VanderJagt.

During a recent interview in his Washington office, Congressman Dunn discussed the need for a balanced federal budget. The following comments are from that interview.

RL: Why do you support a constitutional amendment to bring about a balanced federal budget?

DUNN: I see a balanced federal budget as a viable alternative to the type of spending that goes on in Washington. Overspending goes on, not for any deep seeded conviction on the part of the members on each and every vote, but rather for political reasons. It's much simpler to go home to any district and any special interest group and say that I voted for your program, and your program, and your program. This is definitely not in the best interest of our country.

RL: Under a balanced federal budget, how would the economy improve?

DUNN: We are all basically in one worldwide money market. The world's largest single borrower is the U.S. government. If you lower the amount of money borrowed by our federal government, that leaves more money available. Michigan's agricultural, automotive and construction industries rely heavily on borrowing. Lower borrowing by the federal government means there's more money left for private business.

RL: How would an individual benefit from a balanced budget?

DUNN: In addition to lowered interest rates, federal spending as a percentage of the gross national product would go down. This would result in more money in your pocket for you to make individual decisions on how to spend and save your own money.

RL: Are there any special ways that Michigan could benefit from a balanced federal budget?

DUNN: When you look at the biggest purchases that the average consumer makes in their lifetime, you get down to a house and a car. When you have high interest rates, people can't purchase a house or a car. That's why the Michigan economy is in such terrible shape. I believe that Michigan would benefit more than any other state from a balanced budget. Another problem we're facing in Michigan is the lack of funding for our state highways. The farm industry relies very heavily on those highways to move produce. With the Michigan economy in the

shape it's in, the highway program suffers and that affects agriculture.

RL: Are there any drawbacks to a federal balanced budget?

DUNN: I guess that depends on your perspective. There would need to be some wording in the amendment to deal with a national emergency such as the federal government suddenly needing to vastly increase defense spending in a war situation.

RL: How close are we to a constitutional requirement for a balanced budget?

DUNN: First of all, there are two ways to get a constitutional amendment. A majority of the states can ratify it and present it to the U.S. government. That takes support from 34 states; 31 have supported it thus far. (Editor's Note: States may petition to convene a constitutional convention for the purpose of amending the U.S. Constitution.)

Or, both Houses must pass, by a two-thirds vote, a resolution and then it goes to the states for ratification.

MACMA Sponsors Ice Cream Social



On Aug. 4, the Direct Marketing Division of MACMA sponsored a red tart cherry promotion in Washington, D.C. Over 1,000 people, including the Michigan congressional delegation, sampled various cherry products and MACMA sold over 3,000 pounds of IQF red tart and sweet cherries.

AgriPac Endorsements to Continue for November General Election

Thirty-eight states must ratify the resolution. If both houses of Congress pass resolutions this summer, and I think there's a 50-50 chance of that happening, it would be sent on to the states. Then implementation of the amendment would be probably a two year process.

RL: Can you give us a synopsis of the attitude of the Michigan Congressional delegation toward this idea of the balanced federal budget?

DUNN: We're pretty much split. There are those who feel that all power, wisdom and money should be sent to Washington and the major decisions that affect our nation should be made there. Then there are those who feel, as I do, that given the economic resources, we can do a pretty good job of making up our minds in Michigan.

RL: How would you rate this administration's efforts to achieve economic recovery?

DUNN: On the positive side, the administration has taken inflation from 18% down to about 6%. This is a positive note for those farmers who pay inflated economic costs every year. The prime lending rate has come down from 21% to 15% and that's a step in the right direction.

I believe the majority of farmers in this country also support the stronger defense and reprioritizing of federal dollars. Those are all positive achievements.

On the negative side, I think the administration prioritized their goals in the wrong order. They set out with four goals: reduce taxes, reduce federal spending, increase defense spending and lower the deficit. The administration has been fairly successful. They have not revitalized the economy, in my opinion, because they've been concentrating on the first three. We should have been more concerned about the size of the federal deficit as a number one priority, then revitalize in the economy, further lowering interest rates and then concentrating on building up our defense program.

Sixty-seven candidates endorsed by Michigan Farm Bureau's AgriPac were victorious in the Aug. 10 primary election. Seventy-nine candidates had been designated as "Friends of Agriculture," including 58 Republicans and 21 Democrats.

In state Senate races, 22 of 28 candidates endorsed by AgriPac either won their primary or had no opposition, 37 of 40 candidates in the state House races won and all eight candidates endorsed for the U.S. House of Representatives were victorious.

The key races which AgriPac-endorsed candidates lost were gubernatorial and U.S. Senate. In the

Republican primary, Lt. Gov. James Brickley lost to Richard Headlee and William Fitzgerald lost to James Blanchard on the Democrat ticket. In the U.S. Senate Republican primary, William Ballenger lost to Phillip Ruppe.

The AgriPac endorsement will continue for the Nov. 2 general election for those "Friends of Agriculture" who won their primary contests. The races where AgriPac's candidates were not successful will be reviewed at a meeting Sept. 1. AgriPac will investigate the candidates from both parties who won the primaries and may make additional endorsements at that time.



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In these troubled times of "no money," "no jobs," "no security," it is reassuring to know that some people are still saying "yes." Farm families across the state are saying "yes" to Michigan and the Michigan State Fair.

The Delmont Chapman family of South Rockwood first entered the fair, in 1924, showing a pen of Shropshire sheep. With only a brief hiatus during World War II, the Chapmans have participated in every fair since. Today the fourth generation continues the tradition showing Hampshire and Suffolk sheep.

In the sunny kitchen of his family's three-story brick homestead, Bob Chapman explained why they continue to support the fair year after year.

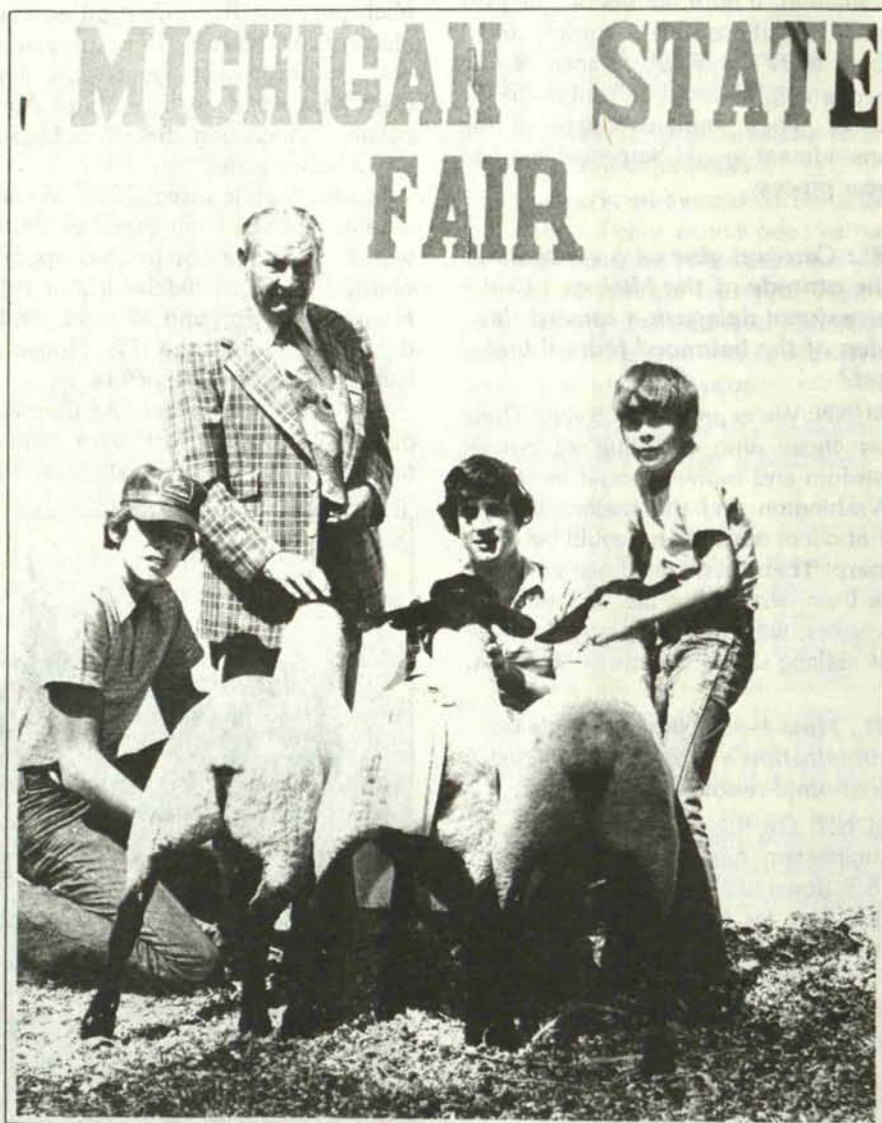
"We're real close to the State Fair and have followed fair business for a long time," he said. "My dad, Delmont, is a former chairman of the State Fair Commission. I guess you could say it's in our blood," he added with a slow grin.

"Everything here stops when the fair comes. It's kind of like our vacation. Granddad, dad, me and the boys are just exhausted by the end of the fair. Every year we swear 'no more.' Then in the fall our ewes lamb, and as we look over the new crop, we start saying 'By golly, it'd be good to show this one or that one at the fair next summer.'"

For the last 14 years, Bob has been either a director or delegate for the Michigan-Wisconsin region at the American Sheep Producers Council. The purpose of the council is to educate and further promote lamb and wool products. He said the State Fair is an ideal showplace.

"In the purebred livestock business it is not only fun but important to take your animals out and see how you look against competition," Bob said.

With 40 to 60 sheep in each class, the competition is stiff. Yet, over the last 10 years, the Chapman Sheep Farm has consistently looked good with animals in the top five in classes ranging from breeding to market. Last year in the open division, they had the Champion Suffolk Pen.



The Chapmans of Rockwood have been showing Shropshire sheep at the Michigan State Fair for four generations.

Farm Families Say 'Yes' to State Fair Tradition

Life is competition," Bob continued. "I don't care what you do. It is important for young people, in particular, to learn about it and get used to it."

It was 41 years ago, at the age of 10, that Bob himself first competed at the fair, showing a market lamb that he'd raised as a 4-H project. Following suit, all four of his sons, Mark, 25, Gary 24, Lee 21, and Robby, 16, have been or are presently 4-H members. Bob's wife, Shirley, noted that the prize money earned was helping put the children through college.

"There's no better place than the fair to find out about the world, travel to new places, and meet all kinds of people from all walks of life," Bob said.

Although the original function of the fair was to show, explain and market produce, Bob notes that the emphasis has expanded beyond selling to a broader, educational sharing of lifestyles. "The biggest change in the fair over the years is that the organizers are trying to bring the rural people closer to the inner-city people and vice versa," he said. "There's more intermingling. Twenty years ago there was a complete separation. But times have changed. So many people have moved out into the country; now we've got to work closer together. The economy necessitates it. We've got to work hand in hand with the people."

Exhibiting Since 1919

It was in 1919 that the first of four generations of the Stanley Powell family in Ionia began exhibiting at the Michigan State Fair.

"The fair," said Stanley Powell, "has been a part of the family as long as I can remember and I'm 84."

It began with his father, Herbert, showing champion Shropshire sheep. Although Stanley helped with the sheep, it was showing his own pure-bred Barred Plymouth Rock chickens that dominate his earliest memories of the fair.

By 1927, Stanley succeeded to the management of Ingleside Farm and 10 years later began an incredible

25-year winning streak at the fair. Showing the herd of Milking Shorthorn cattle that his father had established in 1919, Stanley walked away with either the Premier Breeder or Premier Exhibitor every year until 1967.

Herbert Powell handed over the farm management to his son in 1927 to become state commissioner of agriculture. One of his roles was chairperson of the State Fair. In the same year, Stanley, newly married, recalls being turned away at gate after gate because the fair was too full.

"It was crazy, with my dad being chairperson and all," Stanley said. "But we finally got in, pitched a tent and we newlyweds loved every minute of it," he said, chuckling.

Not content with being merely an exhibitor, in 1944 Stanley was appointed to the 20-member board of managers of the State Fair. For 20 years he served in this capacity under Governors Harry F. Kelly, Kim Sigler, Mennen (Soapy) Williams and George Romney. In November of 1964 he was elected to the state Legislature

and had to resign from what was then the Michigan State Fair Authority.

In the early 1900s there were no 4-H or youth divisions in the State Fair. However, the demand was so great that a youth show soon was established. It was this division that Stanley directed while a member of the board.

"I can remember," he said, "when the old press offices were converted to a girls' dormitory. I dragged my wife into it and we'd act as houseparents during the fair."

Under his supervision, the fair's youth division was greatly expanded. Now 40% of all fair exhibitors are in the 4-H or youth divisions. His five children, Patricia Ann, Ronald, Herbert, Larry and Rex, grew up showing and three of his grandchildren, Douglas, Jon, and Gordon, are now actively involved in showing the Ingleside Milking Shorthorn herd.

For the Chapman and Powell families, the Michigan State Fair has been an important and fun summer event; one they plan to support and participate in for generations to come.



Stanley Powell of Ionia says Ingleside Farms has been showing at the State Fair, "ever since I can remember - and I'm 84." Among his memories is the congratulations of former governor G. Mennen Williams on Powell's prize winning shorthorn bull.



Members Set Policy, in Their Own Words

Larry & Brigitte Leach, Kalamazoo County Farm Bureau members, have been active in the county and state policy development process as committee members and voting delegates.

By Connie Turbin

Concern for the safety and maintenance of county bridges in Sanilac and Houghton counties. . .

The effects of toxic waste disposal on water quality in a Clinton County township. . .

These are examples of local issues that have been surfaced and addressed by county Farm Bureau members, in their own words, through their organization's policy development/policy execution process.

"In its purest and simplest form, policy development is an idea or concern," says John Laurie, chairperson of MFB's 1982 Policy Development Committee. "Ideas for policies at the local, state and national levels are often thought of as members go about their daily routines.

"If members share their concerns with community action group members or other groups of members, then Farm Bureau's policy development process has begun," Laurie says.

Informal discussions in these group situations raise additional questions about the extent or seriousness of a problem. Following these discussions,

group members formulate the ideas and a possible solution in their own words as a policy recommendation and share it with others in the county.

People Most Important

Once ideas are received by the county Farm Bureau, the policy development process becomes more formalized, but "people are still the most important component," according to Larry Leach, policy development chairperson for Kalamazoo County.

"We have what I consider to be an excellent procedure for policy development in this county," he says. "Our committee is quite large - 20 members. That's because we appoint both spouses to the committee. It's worked really well here in Kalamazoo County. We gain the information and input of both partners and, if for any reason one has to miss a meeting, the other can 'cover' the meeting or assignment."

Kalamazoo's Policy Development Committee usually meets five or six times prior to the county annual meeting for work and discussion sessions.

"The time needed to complete the process depends on the members of the committee and the kind of issues

they will examine," Leach says. "We try not to do everything at the meeting. We assign topics, ask committee members to research them and get resource people lined up if they feel we need outside information. Whenever possible we like to have the committee members draft a policy statement that we can 'fine tune' at the committee meeting."

Leach recognizes that policy development time coincides with the pressures of a busy harvest season and, he says, participation has been good on the committee because as chairperson he sticks closely to established meeting times. "We meet at eight and we're out at ten."

Surfacing Policy Ideas

To surface issues important to Farm Bureau members, Kalamazoo County's Policy Development Committee reviews community action group minutes and committee members make an effort to talk with farmers in their section of the county.

Leach says another good source of ideas for the committee is the state-wide cabinet meeting held in Lansing each August. After listening to the

Policy Development is the Place to Learn About Farm Bureau

speakers and talking with leaders from other counties, committee members discuss the issues at their next county meeting.

He cites animal care as an issue that is very important to Kalamazoo County members. "We have veal producers in this county and they were very willing to work on a policy proposal.

"I feel we have a good record in policy development from this county because we have people who see the need to find solutions to problems and they are willing to work together to get the facts and information the committee needs. They do a good job here." Leach says.

Both Leach and his wife, Brigitte, have served as Kalamazoo County delegates to the MFB annual meeting, but in 1981, Brigitte gave up her seat in the county delegation to represent the Michigan Farm Bureau Women on the state Policy Development Committee.

"We Read All County Resolutions

"I was really nervous about the appointment," she admits. But with that novice's experience behind her, she's looking forward to serving on the committee again this year.

"Just working with Farm Bureau members from all around the state on last year's committee really helped me to appreciate how well informed our members are. You name it and a farmer can discuss it," she says.

Although there were many county policy resolutions for the state committee to study and compile, Brigitte says she was surprised at how similar the ideas and philosophy of Farm Bureau members statewide are, "especially on an issue like animal care. A lot of thinking of our members was along the same line," she says. "It wasn't that difficult to prepare a single animal care resolution because the county resolutions shared the same general idea."

Work on the state committee requires a lot of study and hours of reading, she says. "It was a real education for me. At first I was overwhelmed by the sheer number of resolutions and the topics that had to be covered.

I never thought we'd get through it all.

"In the subcommittees, we read every resolution from the counties. It took a long time, but when we were done, we knew what the members wanted and what they were thinking on the issues," she says.

In 1981, MFB members were thinking about over 100 separate state policy issues, ranging from animal care to rural crime prevention. An additional 35 recommended national policies were forwarded to the American Farm Bureau Policy Development Committee by delegates at the state annual meeting in December 1981.

What will members be thinking about in 1982? The opportunity to be part of the process of policy development for the state's largest farm organ-

ization is open to any member willing to discuss, in their own words, the problems and concerns they may have.

Larry & Brigitte Leach urge Farm Bureau members to get involved in the policy development process at some level, "even if you're not that familiar with the Farm Bureau organization, policy development is the place to learn," they say.

"It's important to have new people and new ideas in the process each year at the local and state level," the couple emphasizes. "If you aren't ready to serve on your county policy development committee, share your ideas with the county committee members and be sure to attend the county Farm Bureau annual meeting."

1982 Michigan Farm Bureau Policy Development Committee

District 1

James Jelinek
New Buffalo (Berrien County)

District 2

Keith Preston
Quincy (Branch County)

District 3

Albert Ruhlig
Dexter (Washtenaw County)

District 4

Curt Eubank
Grand Rapids (Ottawa County)

District 5

Mark Smuts
Charlotte (Eaton County)

District 6

John Tanton
Deckerville (Sanilac County)

District 7

Robert Anderson
Paris (Mecosta County)

District 8

Eric Bailey
St. Louis (Gratiot County)

District 9

Clarence Davis
Honor (Benzie County)

District 10

Richard Nelson
West Branch (Ogemaw County)

District 11

Joanne Stefl
Cornell (Delta County)

Farm Bureau Young Farmers

William Penn
Hope (Midland County)
Tom Bodtke
Grand Junction (Van Buren County)

David M. Lott
Mason (Ingham County)

Farm Bureau Women

Brigitte Leach
Climax (Kalamazoo County)
Audrey Stofer
Leslie (Ingham County)
Nancy Rottier
Fremont (Newaygo County)

At Large

John Laurie
Cass City (Tuscola County)
Michael Pridgeon
Montgomery (Branch County)
David Conklin
Corunna (Shiawassee County)

Sanilac County Farm Bureau Leaders Work for Safe Bridges

By Marcia Ditchie

A proposed $\frac{3}{4}$ mill property tax levy for bridge improvement was narrowly defeated in Sanilac County on Aug. 10, but the chairperson of the Citizens for Safe Bridges Committee, which spearheaded the effort, feels that the proposition was not a complete defeat.

"Though it was a defeat numberwise, the Citizens for Safe Bridges Committee feels that we made people aware of the critical condition of our county's bridges," said Faye Adam, who also serves as chairperson of the county Farm Bureau's Local Affairs

Committee, following the defeat of the proposal by just 15 votes.

The vote on the proposition culminated nearly two years of work by county Farm Bureau members.

"In 1980, the deteriorating condition of the county's bridges was one of the areas that was definitely a problem," Adam said. "The Local Affairs Committee drafted a proposed resolution and sent it to the Policy Development Committee where it was reworked and presented to the delegates at the county annual meeting.

"At the 1980 county annual meet-

ing, Sanilac County Farm Bureau members asked for a study to be done on bridge conditions and the feasibility of a countywide millage for bridge improvement," according to Wayne Wood, county president.

After the county annual, the board referred the policy to the Local Affairs Committee for an indepth study of the bridge situation and asked them to report their findings and recommendations to the board.

Members of the committee included Adam, John Merriman, Geraldine Smith, Wayne Laursen, Shirley Tanton, Carol Callendar, Orvel Roggenbuck and John Tanton. Roggenbuck and Tanton served as co-chairpersons for the bridge study project.

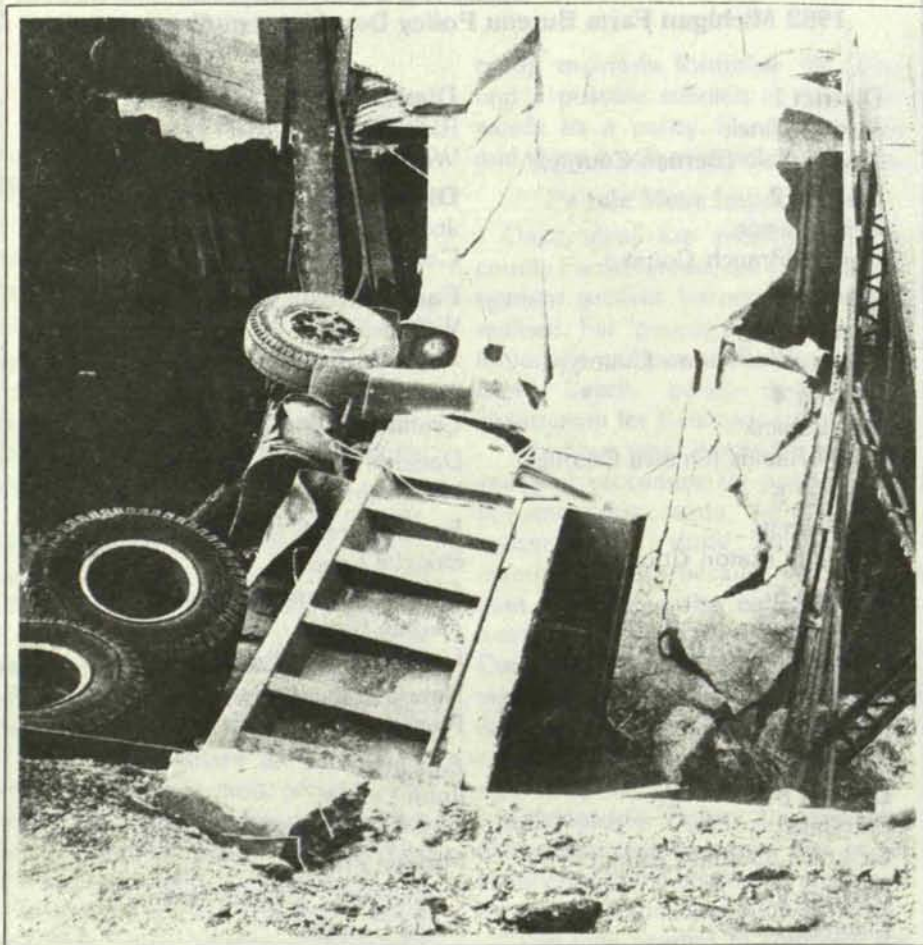
During the committee's study, it was found that 89 bridges with spans of more than 20 feet in length were in poor condition and either closed or had load restrictions. Because of these conditions, emergency and commercial vehicles, school buses and farm machinery were rerouted. Adding to the problem, on July 31, 1982 a bridge that was built around 1900 over the Cass River collapsed.

According to a survey taken by an engineering firm in 1979 for the county Road Commission, the estimated cost for repairing or replacing the 89 bridges at that time was \$4 to 5 million. Current figures have now placed the cost at nearly \$11 million.

Following completion of the committee's study, a resolution was prepared and presented to delegates at the 1981 county annual meeting.

"Last October, the study report and recommendations were adopted unanimously at the annual meeting," President Wood said. "The members asked that a proposal to levy $\frac{3}{4}$ mill for five years be placed on the August 1982 ballot."

(continued on page 25)



In July, collapse of a Sanilac County bridge built around 1900 punctuated the need for repair and reconstruction of other critical bridge structures in the county.

Front and Center

Thirty-one counties have reached their 1982 membership goal as of Aug. 13. Counties reporting goal since July 8 are Oceana (Elmer Gowell, membership chairperson), Osceola (Dale Carmichael) and Wayne (Walter Rochowiak). MFB is now at 98.56% of goal, with seven regions: the U.P., North, West Central, Central, West, Southeast and Southwest, over goal as well as Districts 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10 and 11.

Agriculture Secretary John Block has announced that the farmer-owned reserve will not be open to producers who did not participate in the 1982 reduced acreage program. Despite record high estimates of 1982 corn and wheat ending stocks, Block said the rules of the reduced acreage program will not be changed. According to the 1982 wheat and feed grains program, only participating farmers are eligible for deficiency payments, loans and the farm-owned reserve.

Gov. Milliken has signed an agreement with Mexico to allow the purchase of up to 10,000 head of high quality bred dairy heifers before the end of the year from Michigan and several other states. The agreement was worked out by the MDA's marketing division and the Mexican government. Michigan's responsibility is to assure the quality of the cattle and to verify the sales agreement terms between the seller and buyer. Anyone interested in the program should call the MDA Marketing Division at 517-373-1054.

Dairymen at the August dairy information meetings at Cass City and Grand Rapids, sponsored by MFB, heard proposals for an industry-supported "Michigan Dairymen's Market Program" to promote sales and increase consumer knowledge and acceptance of Michigan dairy products. Dairy leaders are currently seeking signatures of milk producers to petition the MDA director to conduct hearings on the proposal. Comments and information from the meetings were evaluated by the MFB Dairy Advisory Committee on Aug. 11. The committee has formulated policy recommendations to be reviewed and approved by the MFB board of directors. (See related information in Agrinomic Update, page 26.)

State fair goers will have the chance to buy fresh fruits by the piece from a farm market set up in "Agriculture's Amazing Acre." The public will also be able to buy cider, doughnuts, jams, jellies, cookbooks and many other items at the Michigan Certified Farm Markets display. Genesee County FB member Sandy Hill of Montrose is coordinating the display. The fair is scheduled through Sept. 6 at the state fairgrounds in Detroit.

Farmers of the Week

The Farmer of the Week program, co-sponsored by Farm Bureau Insurance Group and the Michigan Farm Radio Network, honors Michigan farmers for their contributions to the community and the agriculture industry. July 1982 recipients were:

July 5 - David Howard, 36, operates a 1,000-acre crop and hog farm near Perry. He serves as a deacon and choir director at Perry Baptist Church, is a Sunday School teacher, plays in the church band and serves on several church committees. He is a member of the Shiawassee County FB and the Michigan Pork Producers Association.

July 12 - Donald Witt, 60, a dairy and cash crop farmer from St. Johns, farms 500 acres and milks a large dairy herd in partnership with his son. Witt, president of the Clinton County FB from 1978 to 1980, is chairperson of the county FB State and National Affairs Committee. He is Clinton County ASCS committee, chairperson and a member of St. Peter's Lutheran Church, DHIA and MMPA.

July 19 - Tom Codere, 30, a potato farmer from Lake Linden, farms 180 acres. He serves on the area ASCS committee, is a member and usher at St. Joseph's Church, is a

Copper Country FB member and has earned several awards, including the Premier Potato Grower of the Year Award for both 1977 and 1979.

July 26 - Martin Appelgreen, 59, operates a 300-acre dairy farm, milks 45 cows and raises beef in the Big Rapids area. He serves on the local DHIA board, is an area ASCS committee member, is treasurer of the Stanwood Farmers Co-op, is a member of St. Mary's Catholic Church and the Knights of Columbus, served many years on the MMPA board, is a Mecosta County FB member and served six years on the FB board; and he served five years as township trustee.

The county Farm Bureau newsletter is published monthly by the Michigan Farm Bureau, P.O. Box 30960, Lansing, Mich. 48909. Subscription price to members, \$1.25 per year, included in the annual membership dues.

FB Leaders Review Policy Issues at Cabinet Meeting



MFB President Elton Smith met with AFBF Research Economist Ross Korves and MFB Policy Development Committee Chairperson John Laurie. Korves discussed national and international issues that will affect agriculture in the coming year.

Attend Your County Annual Meeting

You will have the opportunity to help determine policies that can positively impact *your* farm business and *your* community if you attend the *your* county Farm Bureau annual meeting.

Do you have an idea, an opinion that's been expressed only during discussions at the local coffee shop? Then share it, *in your own words*, where united action can help make it happen - at the county annual meeting.

In your own words is really what Farm Bureau's effective policy development/policy execution process is all about, and it begins at the county level. The county Policy Development Committee will present a slate of resolutions at the county annual meeting, where members will have the opportunity to tell, *in their own words*, and by their votes, what they think of those proposed resolutions.

Those adopted which deal with county issues become the policies of the county Farm Bureau. Those dealing with state and national issues are sent to the Michigan Farm Bureau Policy Development Committee, which is composed of farmers representing all areas of the state.

This committee correlates the resolutions from all county Farm Bureaus, gains further information on the various issues from resource people, and prepares a slate of resolutions to present to voting delegates at the state annual meeting. At the state annual, members once again have the opportunity to state, *in their own words*, their views on the proposed resolutions.

The resolutions adopted by the delegate body which deal with state affairs become the policies of the Michigan Farm Bureau and those dealing with national and international issues are forwarded to the American Farm Bureau Federation where the same process is repeated.

The policies that result from farmers speaking out, *in their own words*, guide our organization at the county, state and national levels, and have an impact on action in our county courthouse, the state capitol and in Congress.

Plan now to attend your county annual meeting. Remember, in Farm Bureau, you make it happen!

The 17th annual Policy Development Conference and statewide cabinet meeting was held Aug. 19 at the Lansing Hilton Inn.

Nearly 200 county leaders and Michigan Farm Bureau and affiliate company staff heard reports on national, international and state policy issues and participated in a panel discussion on Michigan's declining economy.

"The cabinet meeting is an opportunity for county leaders to get full information from Farm Bureau personnel in Washington, D.C., national and international issues and also an opportunity to hear from expert resource people at the state level on budgeting concerns," said Robert Smith, MFB's senior legislative counsel.

During the panel discussion, Doug Roberts, deputy director of Michigan's Department of Management and Budget, reported on the declining economy's effect of the state government.

Michigan Department of Agriculture Assistant Director Tom Tomaszewski commented on how MDA was being effected by the budget cuts.

Lynn Harvey, of MSU's Cooperative Extension Service, focused on individual counties and the economy's impact on them.

Following the panel discussion, Harry Mikan, chief of the MDA Water Resources Division, highlighted the proposed changes in the Michigan Drain Code that will benefit agricultural drainage.

Make it a SAFE HARVEST



National Farm Safety Week
Sept. 19-25, 1982

Young Farmer Contests Recognize Ag Leaders

"Many of the most deserving young farmers in our state will not be recognized for contributions to their community and Farm Bureau, for their dedication to their growing families or for their hard work in building a strong farm business, unless they are nominated or encouraged to participate in the 1982 county Farm Bureau Young Farmer contests," says Vic Vercheureau, manager of the MFB Young Farmer Department.

He urges Farm Bureau members to nominate young farmers for the Outstanding Young Farm Woman and Distinguished Young Farmer contests.

Nominees must be 32 years of age or under, be actively involved in a farming operation, and demonstrate involvement in the community and a willingness to accept a leadership role in agriculture. In addition, contestants in the Distinguished Young Farmer contest will be evaluated for planning and development of the farming operation.

Winners in the county competition will participate in the Michigan Farm Bureau Young Farmer contests in December at the organization's annual meeting.

The winner in the MFB competition for Distinguished Young Farmer will go on to compete with winners from other state Farm Bureaus at the AFBF

national convention in Dallas, Texas, Jan. 8-13. Expenses for the Distinguished Young Farmer and spouse will be paid by the Michigan Farm Bureau.

Michigan's Outstanding Young Farm Woman and her spouse will receive an expense paid trip to the 1983 MFB Washington Legislative Seminar.

District Discussion Meets

Many Young Farmers will also be participating in District Discussion Meets. This year's topics are:

- Water is a limited and depletable resource. What should be the determining factors in its future allocation?

- What can be done to increase participation in the total Farm Bureau program?

- Yield times price minus cost equals net income. We have worked to minimize cost and maximize production. What can we do to increase price?

- What can we do to stimulate foreign demand for products and who should be responsible?

Winners of the district meets will compete at the state annual meeting in December. The statewide winner will compete at the national discussion meet held during the AFBF annual meeting.

Contact your county Young Farmer Committee chairperson or county secretary for details on these contests.

Farm Estate Plan as Vital as Ever

Farmers in Michigan have spent years of hard work building up the values of their farms, and, understandably, they feel a genuine emotional attachment to their farming operations.

Most farmers want to keep their farms intact and in the family after they die. But it doesn't always happen that way.

"Farmers are usually much more energetic in creating their estates than they are in preserving them and passing them on to their heirs," said Robert E. J. Wiseman, executive vice president of Farm Bureau Insurance Group. "That's why an estate plan is so important. A proper estate plan is the surest way to pass your farm to your heirs with the least amount of taxes, settlement costs and outside interference."

Although farmers received some big estate tax breaks from the Economic Recovery Act of 1981, the new law is not a cure-all for the estate planning problems that farmers face. You can spend a lifetime accumulating a farm estate, only to have a large part of it taken from your family through needless estate taxes and expenses.

As the statewide leader in farm estate planning, the Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company of Michigan has assured thousands of Michigan farmers that the family farm will remain in the family.

"You've spent a lifetime building your estate. Shouldn't you decide what will happen to it?" Wiseman said.

Your local Farm Bureau Insurance agent can tell you more.

Bread and Water

Once upon a time, eating was fun, one of life's real pleasures. That was before we Americans discovered that eating is hazardous to our health.

As youngsters, we were taught to eat several selections daily from the four food groups. Now, we're learning to be suspect of anything edible.

Let's look at a typical breakfast . . . the bacon and sausage we love so much have nitrites and fat . . . our eggs have cholesterol . . . hash browns are fried - another no-no . . . milk has too much butterfat . . . our cereals, we're told, aren't really nutritious and we eat them with too much sugar . . . coffee is suspected of causing possible heart problems. This is breakfast, the meal mothers promote to their children as the most important meal of the day.

We could settle for a glass of water and that all-time favorite breakfast item - toast. But . . . hold it! Can we trust toast?

No, say some scientists from Kansas City University. Toasting our bread, they claim, promotes a chemical reaction that reduces protein building amino acids in bread, and converts nutrients into unusable forms. The scientists say it would be more nutritious if we didn't toast our bread.

Do you realize that our breakfast has just been reduced to bread and water? Maybe when we threw convicts in the hole and fed them bread and water, we were doing them a favor. If we'd known then what we know today, we could have threatened them with bacon and eggs, hash browns, cereal, milk, coffee and toast. That would have made them change their ways!

Blue Cross Blue Shield Reopening Sept. 1-15

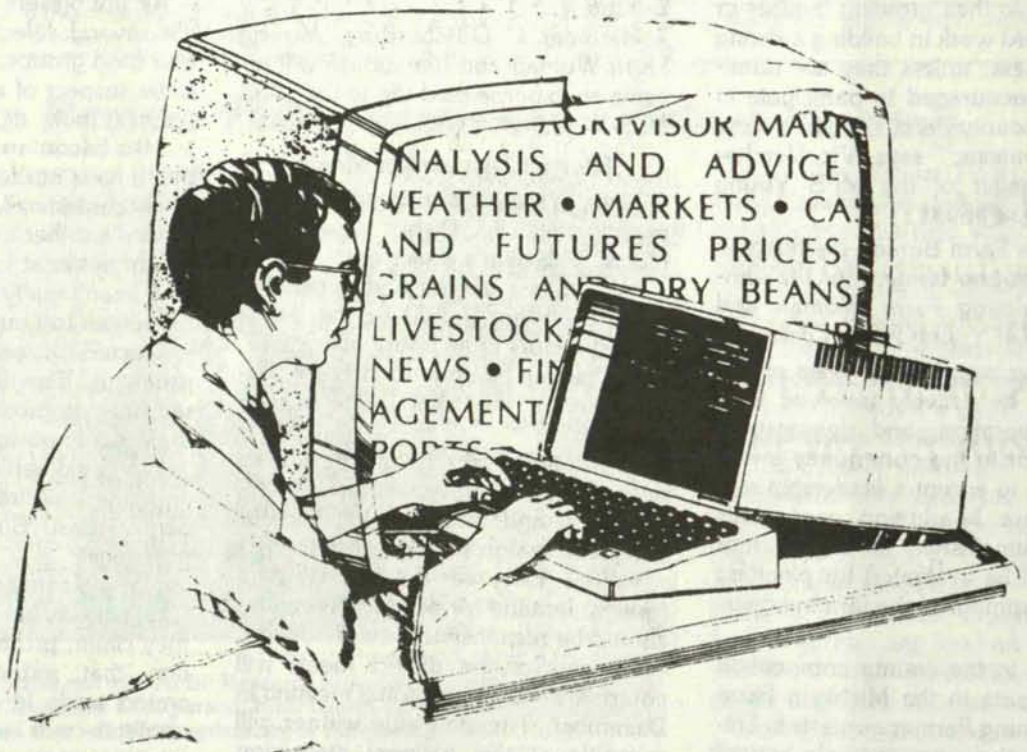
A special reopening period for Blue Cross Blue Shield subscribers in the Farm Bureau group will be held Sept. 1-15. Currently enrolled subscribers will be allowed to change their contract to a lower cost co-pay plan without having to complete a health questionnaire. Coverage will be effective Nov. 20 and subscribers must have paid their Aug. 20 billing.

The Farm Bureau group offers two co-pay plans with excellent coverage.

For more information on these plans and changing your BCBS coverage contact your county secretary prior to Sept. 15, 1982.

AGRICOM®

Your Computerized Information Connection



The one year subscription to the AgriCom system is a very affordable \$99 per month, payable in quarterly amounts of \$297. As an incentive to farm operators who pay for one year in advance (\$1,089), they will receive one month of AgriCom's computerized information free.

AgriCom subscribers who don't have an on-farm computer may purchase a 16k Radio Shack Color Computer system for only \$500 at one of the 11 September sign-up meetings.

A farmer-member only service of the Michigan Farm Bureau.

Farm Bureau

You can ask AgriCom representatives about on-farm applications and benefits of this new computerized information connection for your farming operation at one of 11 demonstration meetings to be held during September. Plan to attend at a location near you.

Scheduled Meetings

Sept. 13 Farm Bureau Center
7:30 p.m. 7373 W. Saginaw
Lansing

Sept. 14 Holiday Inn East
7:30 p.m. I-75 & Holland Ave.
Saginaw

Sept. 15 The Colony House
7:30 p.m. 8430 N. Van Dyke
Cass City

Sept. 16 Hyatt Regency
7:30 p.m. One Riverfront West
Flint

Sept. 21 Holiday Inn
7:30 p.m. US-31 & W. Broadway
Three Rivers

Sept. 22 Holiday Inn
7:30 p.m. 1575 W. Mawmee
Adrian

Sept. 23 Holiday Inn South
7:30 p.m. 250 28th St. SW
Grand Rapids

Sept. 28 Holiday Inn
7:30 p.m. M-20 & US-27
Mt. Pleasant

Sept. 29 McGuire's Restaurant
1:30 p.m. Mackinaw Trail
Cadillac

Sept. 29 Chalet Motor Lodge
7:30 p.m. I-75 & M-32, Gaylord

Sept. 30 Terrace Motor Inn
1:30 p.m. US-2 & 41, Escanaba

Subscribe to AgriCom and be among the
"Who's Who" in Michigan Agriculture!

AgriCom: The Marketer's Information Edge

Speed of information delivery ranks high in "pioneers" ratings of MFB's AgriCom program

By Donna Wilber

Since October 1981, Michigan Farm Bureau has been involved in a pilot marketing information and education program called AgriCom. Twenty-five farmers were selected to participate in the pilot program which would bring them a wide range of information via on-farm computers, plus educational seminars to help them sharpen their marketing skills. These 25 participating farmers were given the title "AgriCom Pioneers."

AgriCom became the pioneers' link to the latest information on futures and cash markets, agricultural weather, financial markets, pest management, market analysis and agricultural, legislative and organizational news.

The service was enhanced with the addition of marketing advice through Illinois Farm Bureau's highly-respected AgriVisor service in May 1982. This service provided them twice-daily with specific recommendations for hedging, forward contracting or cash marketing their grain and livestock, and alerts for best price opportunities on feed purchases.

The addition of AgriVisor to the program has been a popular decision with the AgriCom Pioneers. It made them part of the prestigious group of producers who consistently receive crop and livestock prices in the top one-third of the market. AgriVisor advice has been provided to Midwestern farmers since the mid-70s; currently over 2,000 farmers subscribe to it.

Based on the success of the pilot program and recommendations of the pioneers, the AFBF and MFB boards approved expansion of the program. It is being offered to all farmers as a Farm Bureau member-only service. The promotional kick-off took place at MSU's Ag Expo '82 on July 20-22, where several hundred farmers indicated their interest in becoming subscribers.

AgriCom project coordinator Robert Craig and his staff will convince

farmers on the value of the service during a series of 11 out-state demonstration and sign-up meetings in September. (See the meeting schedule and information on the preceding page.)

The one-year subscription to the AgriCom system is \$99 per month, payable in quarterly amounts of \$297. Farm operators who pay for one year in advance (\$1,089) will receive one month of AgriCom's computerized information free.

All AgriCom subscribers have full information access to the system, via toll free telephone lines, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Subscribers who do not have an on-farm computer should estimate an additional \$500 investment for the purchase of a 16K Radio Shack Color Computer system. However, any micro-computer that has a terminal software package utilizing standard TTY communications and a telephone modem will be compatible with the AgriCom system.

Private telephone service for data transmission is required.

"It Saves Me Money; It Makes Me Money"

Wayne Rodgers, a dairy and grain farmer from Caledonia, became an AgriCom Pioneer because he was "disgusted with always selling at the lower price."

"When we had grain to sell," Rodgers said, "we'd usually store it after harvest in anticipation of marketing it at a higher price. When you don't know what the markets are doing, you reach a point where you decide to sell and hope that's the best price. Usually, you've waited too long, so you're selling at the bottom half of the market, which is, I think, the case with most farmers. The goal of the AgriVisor program is to market in the upper third of the market."

AgriCom Marketing Seminars Improve Skills

Rodgers believes the AgriVisor advice is one of the best services of its kind, one that has both saved him money and made him money.



WAYNE RODGERS

"I've been using AgriVisor advice to purchase soybean meal. We buy a semi-load (24 tons) at a time and that lasts us about three months. Using the advice, we've been able to buy it at the lowest possible price. That alone has saved us about \$6 a ton," he said.

"We sell corn and wheat as cash crops. For the last 45 days now, AgriVisor has had several recommendations to hedge a certain percentage of your crop and I have followed the advice. Working through a local broker, I've put these hedges on. I have contracts on the futures market and these positions are going to return me, for example, an additional 50 cents a bushel on corn over the price I would get locally.

"The subscription fee to the service may sound like a large investment, but I think if you have grain or livestock to sell and you follow the advice of the AgriVisor program, it's a small amount to invest in marketing. Just in the couple months that I've been following the advice, I've probably paid for it several times over," Rodgers said.

The Kent County farmer also likes the weather information and the alerts for pest control, insects and other crop

problems, and believes the legislative reports are of real value to farmers.

"The information provided regarding the current happenings in the state Legislature and in Congress keeps me up-to-date on new developments that concern agriculture," he said. "This is information that we'd never read about in our local newspaper. We may read about it in a farm magazine in another month or six weeks, but that's not like a daily update."

Rodgers attended both the "Discovery '82" computer and farm management workshop and an educational marketing seminar in June.

"The educational part of this program is extremely important. In that respect, we've just gotten a good start; we've got a lot more to learn. The more we learn, the better we'll be able to use the service," he said.

"I Like the Convenience"

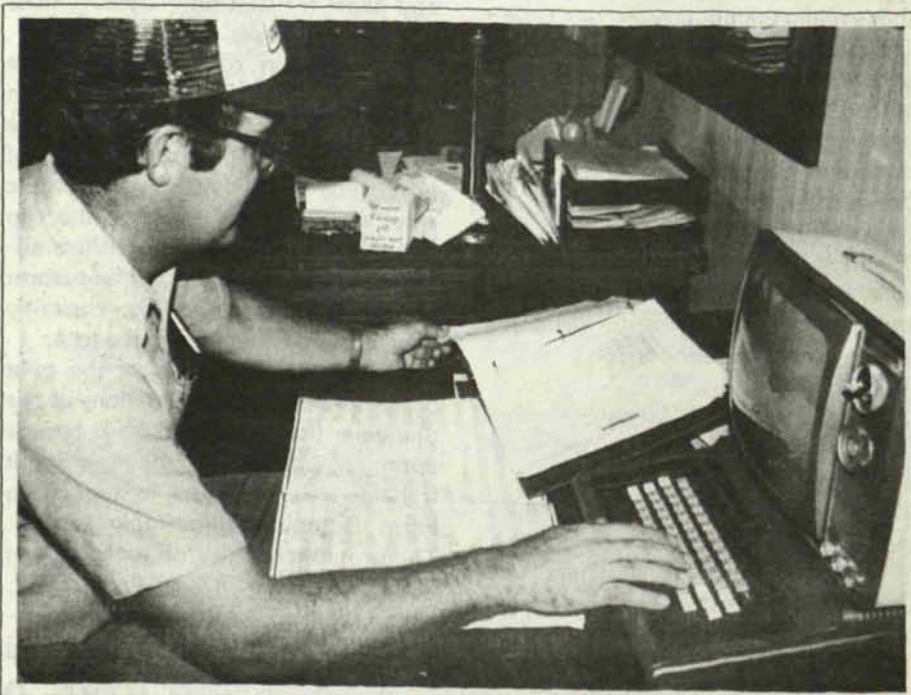
AgriCom Pioneer Bill White of Jones in Cass County produces 10,000 hogs per year and also raises corn, wheat and oats.

"To me, the big plus of the service is convenience. The information is there for me to use at my convenience and not restricted by the arrival of the mail," White said. "I could wait for the *Wall Street Journal* to arrive at noon, but by then the markets are open and prices have changed. Newsletters are nice to have, but not timely. Sometimes the radio reports are on when my work schedule doesn't allow me to tune in.

"Personally, I like being able to get up at 5 or 6 a.m., call up and get yesterday's closing prices. Calling at night for that day's closings gets me thinking and keeps me awake.

Just in the couple of months I've been following the (AgriCom) advice I've probably paid for it several times over.

- Wayne Rodgers



AgriCom Pioneer Bill White updates his price charts daily with information transmitted to his farm office on Michigan Farm Bureau's AgriCom system.

AgriCom's Legislative News Vital to Farmers

"The AgriCom program is really a tool, just like a tractor," he said. "You can let it set there and do nothing and it won't help you. Or you can use it, with the skills you've learned, and make it work for you."

White, like Rodgers, believes the educational portion of the program is vital.

"The more we learn, the better we'll be able to use the information we receive," he said. "It gives us an edge if we understand charting, for example. We want to know some of the whys. By keeping track of the prices on charts, you begin to understand the information and advice and can make your own decisions."

White subscribes to a quarterly charting service and updates his charts daily from the information received on AgriCom.

He is convinced that, eventually, computers on the farm will be as common as tractors even though "farmers are a bit like the people who continued to use gaslights after Edison had invented the electric light bulb.

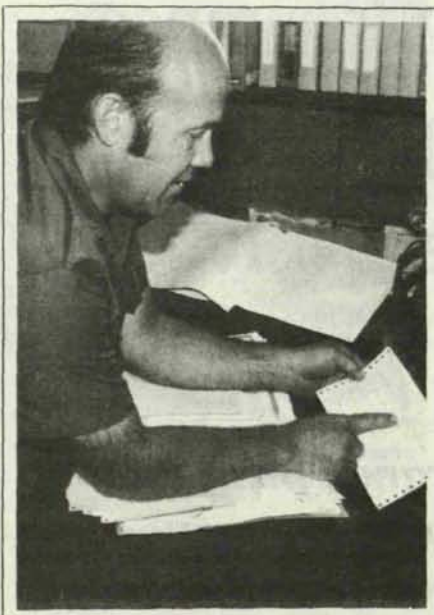
"AgriCom is a good program and it should be well accepted. Things are tough for cash crop farmers now, but that's really the time when they need it the most," he said.

It was White's wife, Susie, who convinced him to be an AgriCom Pioneer because of her interest in computers, a carryover from her college days. Her hopes to be the "key operator" had to be postponed for the birth of their son, Johnny, but White sees not only his wife, but also his three daughters and son becoming a part of the computer farming team in the future.

"Overall, It Greatly Enhances the Farm Plan"

Unlike Rodgers and White, to whom using computers was a new experience, AgriCom Pioneer Bill Spike, a dairy and cash crop farmer from Owosso in Shiawassee County, was one of the first "computer farmers" in the state. So AgriCom easily became a part of the Spike family's progressive farm operation.

"The quality of AgriCom's informa-



Bill Spike is an "AgriCom Pioneer" but the family farm has used computers for many years. They are currently working on development of a crop management program using computer equipment.

tion is probably as good as you can get anywhere in the country," Spike said. "I certainly respect the ability and advice of Jim Gill (director of market analysis, Illinois Farm Bureau). It takes a lot of things to make a program like this successful, but AgriVisor certainly is a real asset.

"For us, one of the basic advantages of the program is that it gives us a ready place to get market information that we can't always catch over the radio, and, certainly, anything you get through the mail is a lot more interesting as history than as news," he said.

Spike believes that another advantage has been the opportunity to closely involve one of his key employees in the program. "He's learning more about the markets and has a better feel for what I'm trying to accomplish in the marketing plan. It's given him a better understanding of how we're doing because of the markets and how they change," Spike said. "It's an education for him that I couldn't very easily give him in any other way. I think, overall, it greatly enhances the farm plan."

The Spikes use their computer not only for their sophisticated dairy man-

agement system and crop management program, they also utilize its capabilities for their "do-it" program.

"Our 'do-it' program is an instructional maintenance log that may say . . . grease this or that, flush the cooler - just daily maintenance chores that are quite easily forgotten," Spike said.

"We're still working on the crop management program. It's basically a cross accounting system, by enterprise and by field and also by major pieces of equipment. The program will show actual cost of planting a field, taking into account the overhead cost of tractor, implement, fuel consumption, hourly rate, fertilizer, insecticide, seed, etc." he explained.

As chairperson of the state Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, Spike was already convinced he should participate in the reduced acreage program, but he was pleased that it was also a recommendation of the AgriCom program.

"I took that advice and I believe it's going to make me in the neighborhood of \$50,000 to \$80,000 more than I would have made without complying," he said.

"In our situation, that's simply the difference of having corn that qualifies for the program, putting it in the reserve and getting the \$2.90 reserve loan plus the 26½-cent storage, plus a 15-cent deficiency payment and buying the corn we need at around \$2.00 per bushel. So that's \$2.00 versus about \$3.30."

Spike says one of the main reasons he became an AgriCom Pioneer was to keep up with the legislative news, which he believes is vital information for farmers.

Like most of the other pioneers, Spike plans to continue subscribing to the AgriCom program.

Our Cost is Your Cost

AgriCom project coordinator Craig has predicted that 200 farmers from across the state will subscribe to the new program this year. The subscription fee is based on break-even projections, Craig said. "Our cost is your cost.

Federal Crop Insurance

Helping Farmers Help Themselves

***A new crop insurance program
allows farmers to better manage
the risk of unexpected crop loss.***

By Janice Child

The 1930s were a difficult time. The crash of 1929 brought economic uncertainty to the world and farmers had to face the aftermath of many droughts and the resulting dustbowl. For many families, it was the end to life on the farm and they moved to jobs in "town" or in the cities.

Congress, spurred on by the work of USDA Secretary Henry Wallace and economist Victor Valgren, and with the support of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, passed the Federal Crop Insurance Act in 1938.

Valgren, who worked in the USDA under Wallace, spent 15 years, from 1921 to 1936, researching the records and experiences of private crop insurance companies in order to have valid information available for interested congressmen, Secretary Wallace and for his colleagues.

The impetus for his work was his strong belief in the value of the business of agriculture and the need to diminish its economic uncertainty.

"Crop insurance that covers against all unavoidable hazards, and therefore, in effect guarantees a stipulated minimum yield of return, when the farmer, himself, has done everything possible to bring about a crop, is

necessary before farming can be considered on a par with other industries in safety and certainty of results," said Valgren.

The 1938 law created the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation as an executive agency of and within the USDA. Crop insurance was designed to provide farmers with a management tool to aid them in minimizing their crop risks.

The farmer substitutes payment of regular annual premiums for protection against irregular and damaging losses. He thereby stabilizes his operation by assuring at least a minimum income at a specified time by actual production or indemnity.

Farmers have used Federal Crop Insurance to increase their borrowing power. Crop production guarantees are added to net worth when the insurance attaches at planting. Farmers who borrow against an established line of credit find the insurance increases their ability to qualify for higher lines of credit or lower interest rates.

Crop insurance has also been used to backstop major capital investments to be paid off with income derived from crop production. In a year of crop failure, all-risk Federal Crop Insurance provides an alternate source

of income to meet loan payment obligations and to make payments on rented acreage.

In the years since the inception of Federal Crop Insurance, the types of crops covered and the counties in which the insurance has been available have changed. And farmers have found that this type of all-risk coverage greatly diminishes the natural risks over which they have no control - weather, insects, and/or disease. Crop disasters need not be the personal financial disaster that they might have been in the early 30s. They need not put the farmer and his family out of business.

The Buck Stops Here

Since his inauguration, President Reagan has worked at reducing federal government involvement in many aspects of our lives. His goal is twofold; to clear out unnecessary federal programs, making way for a balanced budget and to provide the mechanism for making the U.S. citizen independent and self-reliant once again.

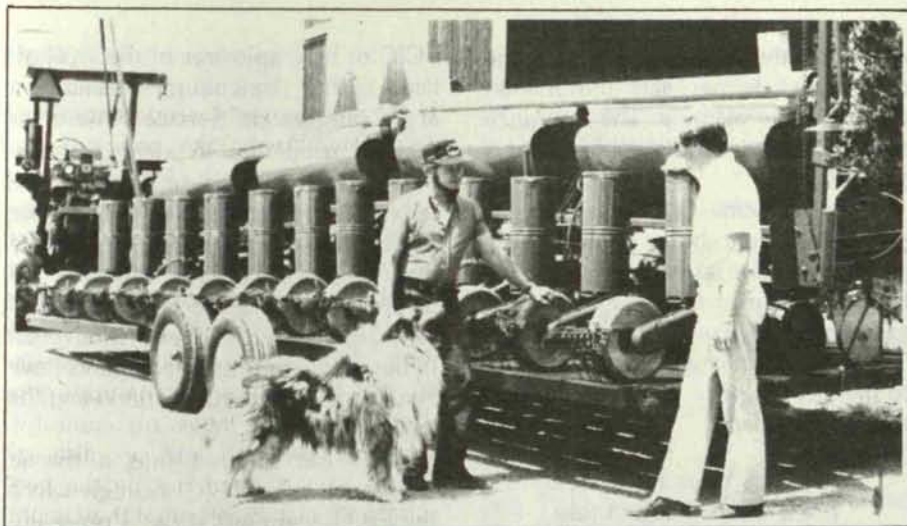
With this goal in mind, President Reagan has asked farmers to get involved in the Federal Crop Insurance program. It is a self-help program through which farmers insure their crops against unexpected loss, rather than look to the Federal Disaster Relief program for aid after crop damage. The Reagan administration also worked to get the FCIC out of the federal government and into the private sector. In the new program, administration, reinsurance funding and claims handling are the responsibility of the FCIC, but the marketing expertise comes from private sector insurance companies.

Farm Bureau Insurance Group, and 21 of the Farm Bureau companies throughout the United States, have gotten involved in this program. Jim Gallagher, a spokesperson for Farm Bureau Insurance Group, explains that there were two primary reasons for the decision:

"Because of our association with the Michigan Farm Bureau, we recognize
(continued on page 24)

RURAL LIVING, SEPTEMBER 1982

Tuscola Auction Supports PBS



Auctioneer David Osentoski (right) and Tuscola County Farm Bureau member Barry Sting are shown with the John Deere 12-row planter Sting consigned to the auction.

Those big, green machines - the familiar green and yellow of John Deere tractors and equipment - were among the over one dozen major brands of agricultural equipment donated by farmers in the Saginaw Valley area to produce big green profits for the Tuscola County Farm Equipment Auction, Aug. 21 at Caro.

Profits from the fund-raiser auction were donated to help support agricultural programming and other broadcasting services of public television station WUCM-TV at Delta College in Saginaw.

The station currently serves Saginaw, Bay and Midland counties, with some broadcast penetration into Tuscola County. WUCM is currently attempting to acquire FCC license approval to expand broadcasting service to Tuscola County, Huron and Sanilac counties.

According to event coordinator, Andrea Hofmeister of the Tuscola County Farm Bureau Women, the group took on the fundraising project because they felt it was a community need that farmers could really support.

"We were appreciative of special agricultural programming on Channel 19, like the PBS syndicated 'Market to Market' program that's aired every Friday night," she said.

The "Market to Market" program features an analytical view of agriculture as it relates to farm and food policy, world politics and weather related factors. There's also market in-

formation and a 10-minute segment on futures prices and hedging.

"We recognize that public broadcasting is supported through tax dollars, federal assistance and public and private donations, and that federal budget cuts have gradually decreased the amount of programming dollars available to stations like WUCM.

"In order to maintain the excellence in programming that we have come to expect from the station, our members agreed to organize the farm community as a segment of the stations' public willing to back up their appreciation with dollars," Hofmeister said.

Contacts were made with auctioneer David Osentoski of Osentoski Realty in Caro and with area service clubs, i.e. the Caro Exchange Club and Zonta International of Cass City, to organize and conduct the farm equipment auction.

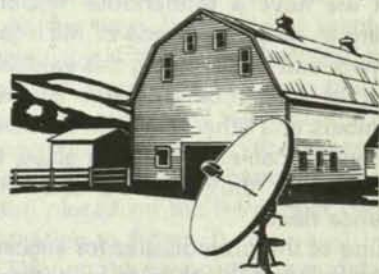
"The response has been terrific," Hofmeister said, "and it really hasn't been that much work. In fact, it's been a lot of fun.

"We have been really pleased with the response from the news media. Several publications supported the auction by offering to print our auction bill free of charge," she said.

The Tuscola Farm Bureau Women will be evaluating the success of the project and determining whether the auction will be carried out as a semi-annual event to raise funds for community projects.

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Crop Insurance Premiums Tied to 'Insured Market Value'

(continued from page 22)

that we have a tremendous responsibility to meet the needs of Michigan farmers and by providing this valuable form of insurance to Farm Bureau members and other Michigan farmers, our agents can enhance their ability to provide for the insured's total insurance needs."

One of the prerequisites for success in this program is obtaining an acreage report on the land to be insured. An acreage report shows the location, the number of acres, the share in the crop and the date of planting. This report, submitted promptly after planting is completed, is the basis for the premium and the amount of protec-

tion provided. Using this acreage report, the farmer sets the market value prior to planting. The insurance must be in place before the first seed is planted.

Usually several per bushel or per pound prices are shown on the actuarial table for the farmer's county. The farmer may select the price to be used to compute a loss - should one occur. The premium charge varies according to the insured price or "market value" the farmer selects.

Making Your Future A Little More Predictable

In the past, Federal Crop Insurance was sold directly by employees of the

FCIC or by employees of the local offices of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. One other method used was to allow commissioned agents, not employees of the federal government, to sell and service the contracts. Experience has shown that personal contact with the individual farmer is the best method of establishing the need and motivation to buy and commissioned agents have been most successful in marketing the insurance.

FBIG has entered into a master agreement with FCIC through which the FBIG agent will act as a representative of both FBIG and FCIC. The agent will be responsible for obtaining the necessary acreage report and for serving the account. If there should be a claim, the FCIC will send a member of its claims staff to evaluate the loss and determine the indemnity payable.

At the present time, the FCIC has claims representatives available in every county. Generally, these claims representatives are farmers who work for the FCIC on a part-time basis. Because of their expertise, they are able to determine the extent of the damage.

Farm Bureau Insurance is the largest company that will be handling Federal Crop Insurance in Michigan.

Crop insurance meets a definite need in the agricultural and rural community. It provides farmers with the security of knowing that they are protected in case of loss caused by a natural disaster. It also alleviates the strain on farmers and other taxpayers caused by funding disaster programs that only minimally meet the needs of those affected.

By providing this form of insurance, FBIG is reaffirming its commitment to the agricultural community of Michigan. It is also providing farmers with another FBIG service to help make the future a little more predictable.

Janice Child is field communications coordinator for FBIG Marketing Corporation. She serves as editor of *Crossroads*, FBIG's monthly agent magazine.



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Farm Bureau Services, Inc.

Safe Bridge Committee Still Campaigning

(continued from page 14)

At its January meeting, the Board of Commissioners agreed to place the proposition on the August ballot for countywide consideration.

In early February, the Citizens for Safe Bridges Committee was organized to take the bridge issue to the attention of the county residents. Farm Bureau's Local Affairs Committee members served on the committee with Adam as general chairperson. Bob Graves served as chairperson of the finance subcommittee, Wayne Wood as chairperson of the public relations subcommittee and Geraldine Smith as chairperson of the publicity subcommittee.

"We put on an intense campaign on the issue," said Adam. "Our official kick-off was April 26 with a press conference in Sandusky, but after the county annual meeting last fall there was publicity in newspapers and on radio.

"A week before the election, we bought advertising in newspapers and on radio and held five meetings, one in each commissioner district, to explain the ballot issue. In addition, we had a booth at the Croswell and Sandusky fairs."

The defeat of the proposition will only contribute to the already deteriorating condition of the county's bridges according to Adam.

"They're not going to get any better. I think it's going to be very interesting to see what happens in another year. Since we started the campaign, we've had some bridges closed that previously were just restricted. A lot of bridges were built around the same time as the one over the Cass River which collapsed in July, so they will just get increasingly worse.

"People will just have to face the facts. Do they go around? Can they get along without the bridges? Are

they willing to pay a few dollars to get them back in service?" she said.

At the time *Rural Living* went to press, the Citizens Committee and Sanilac County Farm Bureau had requested a recount of the ballots. If the recount is unsuccessful, the necessary papers will be filed to have the proposition placed on the November ballot, according to Adam.

Though the proposition was defeated in the primary election, the basic philosophy of surfacing a concern of the county's residents, taking it through the policy development process, conducting an indepth study and placing it on the ballot was in essence a victory.

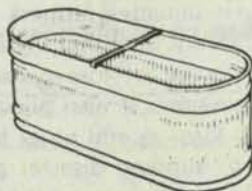
"It certainly made people aware of the problem. It was a good exercise to surface and evaluate a problem. The particular process and procedure that we went through could apply to many local problems and issues in any county," Adam said.

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Farm Bureau Services, Inc.

Supply Management Issues Dominate Dairy Industry

The national dairy situation continues to be a major topic of discussion in Washington as legislators scramble to reconcile the budget. While the rate of increase in milk production has slowed from 3.5% for the first half of 1981 to 1.3% for the first half of 1982, CCC's purchases are still expected to total a record 14 billion pounds milk equivalent in 1982.

Perhaps the most revealing statistic of all is that milk production from 1978 through 1981 has increased 11.1 billion pounds while commercial sales of dairy products during the same period have increased only 1.1 billion pounds. With cow numbers increasing for the 30th consecutive month and replacement numbers up 9% from July 1980, little relief is in sight.

A number of critical questions were discussed at the Farm Bureau-sponsored dairy information meetings re-

cently held in Cass City and Grand Rapids.

Should promotion programs be expanded? Revised?

Total food intake per person has been relatively stable in the United States since 1960. Dairy product consumption, however, declined nearly 18% during the same period from 375 pounds in 1960 to 309 pounds per person in 1981. Dairy products which accounted for 27% of the food consumed per person in 1960, dropped to 22% in 1981.

While total consumption has declined, certain products have made dramatic increases. Low fat and skim milk sales have increased nearly 118%, American cheese 55%, and all other cheeses 105%. Ice cream sales have also increased over 9%. During the same period, whole milk sales have

dropped 26.4% while butter sales have remained almost constant.

Promotion may provide a partial solution to the current problem and the above information suggests that several products have expanded markets and could provide greater returns on advertising dollars.

Would production controls solve the imbalance?

The basic yardstick for measuring any controlled-type proposal is "will the proposal bring about the required decrease in milk production?"

The supply management programs that have been proposed in recent months provide for a base or quota and a minimum price support level of 70 to 75% of parity. Under the programs, a dairyman could produce at his current level, pay the penalty on excess deliveries, and receive a return

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that exceeds his present milk check or increase his base next year by increasing his production this year.

Any proposal must be nationwide in scope. An exemption for any reason would undermine the purpose of supply control and allow those who qualify for the exemption to increase production.

Another common point in many base plans is "base update." Base update permits a dairyman to increase his base next year by increasing production this year. A program which is built on a three year rolling average or allows another form of base update will quickly become ineffective unless the support price or some other mechanism discourages expansion. At the same time, the price for overbase milk must be established at a level low enough to discourage the production of such milk. The price should be more than one-half of the U.S. average price for manufacturing milk (\$5 to \$6 per cwt.).

Provisions for new dairymen's allocation would also be an important ingredient of any base program. Base allocations in excess of the national base, however, undermine the control program.

Some producers like a quota plan because of the opportunity to own or attach a value to the base. Prohibitions against owning a quota prevent the base from taking on unreasonable value and assures that new dairymen will not be kept out of the market simply because of the high cost of quota acquisition. Therefore, it follows that a producer's base must stay with the farm or be forfeited when he leaves dairying.

The primary requisite of any supply control program involves placing an effective ceiling on the total quantity produced. The current proposals under consideration fail to meet this basic test.

Would a lower support price curb production?

Most dairymen agree that a support price of 80% of parity, with semiannual adjustment, encouraged expansion and led to our current oversupply.

Current AFBF policy suggests that the support level should be tied to CCC purchases. As purchases increase, the support level would in turn be lowered. An attractive feature of this plan is that as production declines a built-in incentive exists since the support level would increase.

Other support price proposals under consideration include maintaining the current \$13.10/cwt. support through 1985 and lowering the support to \$12.60/cwt. immediately with a \$12.00/cwt. support after Jan. 1, 1983. The administration's proposal is similar to these in that it would give the secretary of agriculture complete discretionary authority to set the level of

support from zero to 90% of parity.

The dairy industry accounts for nearly 25% of the total net cash farm receipts in Michigan and has been one of the most stable segments of Michigan agriculture. Because of an effective dairy program and progressive, efficient producers, a steady supply of wholesome products at reasonable prices has been available to consumers. The current situation is temporary, one that will be resolved by the industry as it acts in a responsible manner to deal with it.

Agronomic Update is prepared by MFB's Commodity Activities and Research Department.

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12x24	25	20x40	67
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16x24	29	26x40	83
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Michigan's Drain Code

Population and land use issues impact today's drainage project planning.

Drainage is extremely vital to the agricultural industry in Michigan. It has been estimated that 7.8 million acres or 68% of Michigan's 11.5 million acres of crop land has drainage needs and/or problems. The Michigan Drain Code spells out procedures for constructing and maintaining county and intercounty drains. The code has not been significantly changed since 1956.

Background Information

Drainage has been and continues to be a very controversial, but important issue in Michigan. Over 70% of the state's agricultural production depends on constructed water courses for existence. Many of the water courses were constructed, and have been maintained, in accordance with the Michigan Drain Code.

The Michigan Drain Code, as it exists today, has evolved from various drainage laws. Some of these laws were enacted as early as 1819. The last major revision of the Drain Code occurred in 1956 - 26 years ago.

The present Drain Code reflects a piecemeal compilation having many cross-references, exceptions and hidden intricacies. As a result, there is a wide difference in the interpretation and administration of the Drain Code.

There is a significant difference between today's drainage projects and to those in the 1950s. Initially, drainage projects were primarily for the purpose of reclaiming lowlands and removing excess water so land could be farmed. Today, virtually all potential agricultural lands worth the investment have been drained. The emphasis has shifted to maintenance or reconstruction of the original drainage system and improving existing drains so they will provide outlets for more extensive drainage of existing crop land.

Increasing population and accompanying pressures on land use appears to be an irreversible trend. Requirements for drainage change as the use of land changes. For example, urban

storm water drainage is generally needed where urban expansion and development has occurred.

Task Force Formed

In 1980, the Michigan Department of Agriculture formed a 10-member task force to examine the Drain Code, identify problem areas where the code does not meet the needs of agriculture or others and recommend solutions to the problem. Following is a brief summary of the task force recommendation for changes in the Drain Code:

- Solutions to drainage problems should take into account land use patterns. An urban storm water program should be developed to recognize the need for solutions which are compatible with overall needs of the watershed.

- The Drain Code must more clearly reflect existing environmental laws to better protect the public values when a natural water course is involved.

- Drainage procedures should be reinforced by a more open process of public involvement to allow meaningful input by those affected. Issues upon which feasibility is determined should be expanded beyond just the fiscal or engineering aspects to include economic analysis, environmental impact and community and social effects.

- Standards should be developed to minimize the adverse impacts of drainage projects on fish, wildlife, agricultural land and other natural resources. Mitigation of unavoidable impacts should be included as part of project cost.

- An expanded mandatory program of preventive, continuous maintenance must be provided to remove the frequent negative image people associate with major drainage maintenance projects.

Legislation (H.B. 5424) was introduced during the 1982 session of the Michigan Legislature to implement



the task force recommendations. It is strongly opposed by county drain commissioners and is not expected to receive public hearings. It will probably be introduced again next year.

An especially controversial provision of H.B. 5424, included by the sponsor, that was not a part of the recommendations of the task force, would require all agricultural irrigators using 100,000 gallons or more of water per day to obtain a permit. The permit would be administered by the drain commissioner in each county. The irrigator would be required to supply all of the hydrologic data needed by the drain commissioner to make a decision on the permit application. Before issuing a permit, the drain commissioner would be required to hold a public hearing and notify all persons living within one mile of the property to be irrigated.

Current Farm Bureau Policy

Delegates to the 1981 Michigan Farm Bureau Annual Meeting adopted policy supporting the Drain Code task force recommendations. The policy states:

Much of Michigan's nearly 12 million acres of farmland requires drainage to produce food. Agriculture cannot continue to expand without adequate drainage systems. We support the need for proper drainage systems, timely maintenance and the protection of drainage outlets.

We support retention of authority for administration of the Drain Code in the Department of Agriculture. We support the amendments recommended by the MDA Drain Code Task Force to update the present antiquated Drain Code. The amendments would recognize and protect the need for adequate agricultural drainage and update procedures of the code to better serve public interest.

No policy was adopted regarding the irrigation permit provisions since H.B. 5424 was not introduced at the time.

Conclusions

Man's need, and his perception of those needs, have changed considerably from the period during which most of the initial drainage modifica-

tion was accomplished. Wetlands have many important values that were overlooked in the haste to clear land and raise crops. Modern agriculture is under pressure to feed a continuously expanding world population by producing crops on a rapidly shrinking land base while, at the same time, minimizing adverse impacts to water, land and related natural resources.

Virtually all potential agriculture lands worth the initial investment have been drained. Emphasis has now shifted to maintaining or reconstructing original drain systems or improving drains to provide more intensive drainage of existing crop lands.

Increasing population density and corresponding intensity of land use appears to be an irreversible trend. Laws, regulations and procedures evolve to reflect the demands of changing society. The Michigan Drain Code represents the current product of a process of enacting and recoding drain laws over the years to meet particular needs. There are, however, by the omission of virtually all who are involved or impacted by it, deficiencies which need attention to more closely align the Drain Code to present and future needs of the people of the state in a more equitable manner.

Questions for Discussion

•Does agriculture in your county depend upon county and inter-county drains for drainage?

•Are new county and inter-county drains being constructed or does most of the drainage work in the county involve maintenance of existing drains?

•Are existing drains being adequately maintained or are they overgrown with trees and obstructed by vegetation and other debris?

•Should the Drain Code be amended to include a permit program for agriculture irrigators?

•Should Farm Bureau continue to support the recommendation of the Drain Code task force (task force recommendations did not include the irrigation permit program)?

The Discussion Topic is prepared by Ken Wiles, manager of the MFB Member Relations Department.

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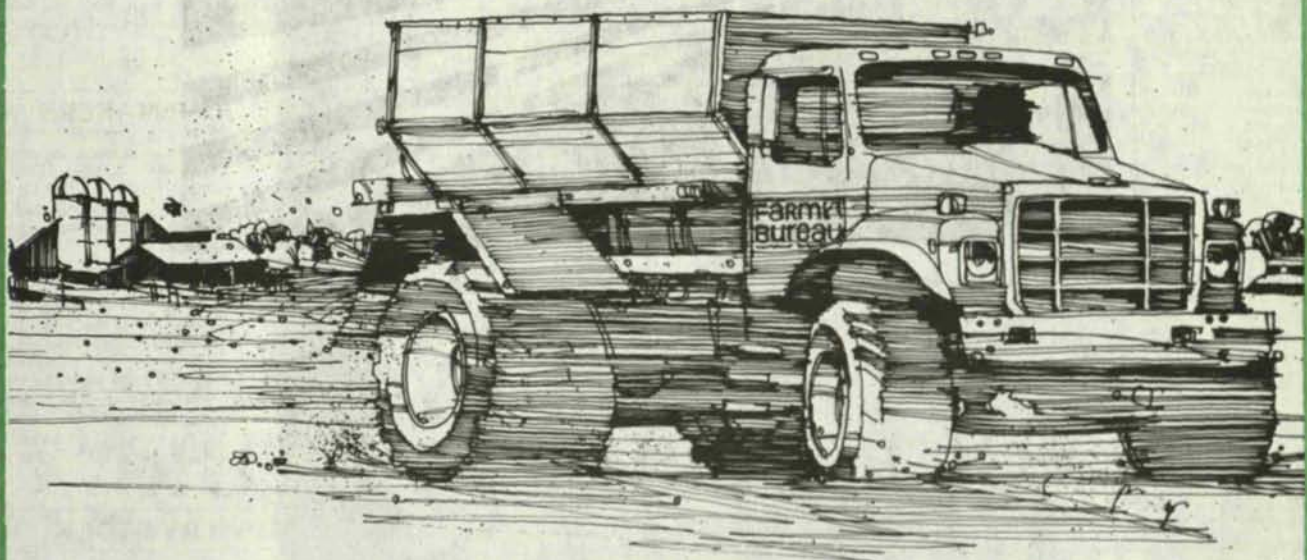
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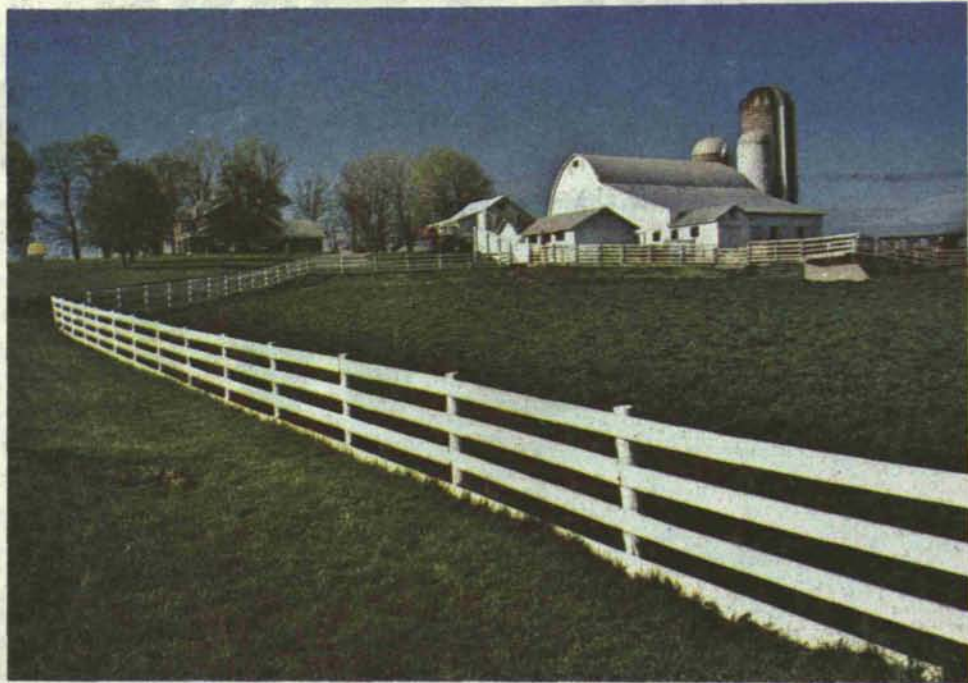


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