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MICHIGAN FARM NEWS

MAY 1988

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RuralLiving

MICHIGAN FARM NEWS

A Publication of the Michigan Farm Bureau



About the Cover

Warm weather and spring rains combine to turn the landscape into picturesque beauty.

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8 **Farmers Receive Warm Welcome in Nation's Capital** The Michigan Farm Bureau delegation went to Washington, D.C., on the annual Washington Legislative Seminar to seek opportunities to strengthen the industry.

10 **Cherries Linked to New Sausage** Pleva's Meats in Leelanau County has a new best-seller — cherry pecan sausage. And the MDA says it is the leanest sausage on the market today.

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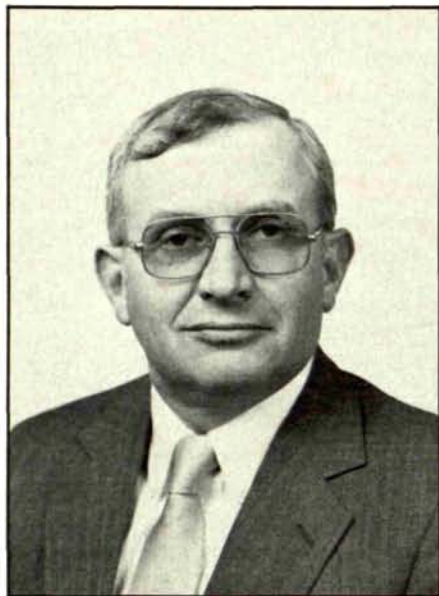
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President's Message



Agriculture Still Holds Career Opportunities for High School Graduates

There's nothing better than sitting on a tractor seat on a nice spring afternoon, contemplating the bounty of the coming year.

It's the season to visualize another harvest, too...the graduation of thousands of Michigan high school students, all of them eagerly anticipating their future opportunities.

But how many of these young leaders will choose agriculture as a profession? Too few, I'm afraid. Enrollment at Michigan State University's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources has declined from 3,105 students in 1978 to only 1,968 in 1987. The National Association of State Land Grant Colleges and Universities reports that baccalaureate degrees awarded for agriculture, natural resources, and related fields declined from 100,447 in 1978 to 65,543 in 1987.

I'm convinced that there are tremendous opportunities for young people in agriculture and agribusiness:

- Farming has a bright future for those willing to adapt to the needs of the marketplace, thanks to declines in production expenses and increasing export sales.
- With the diversity of Michigan agriculture, there will be an increasing need for people trained in farm management, finance, marketing, sales, and merchandising.
- The unlimited potential of the revolution in biotechnology has created a pressing demand for scientific specialists, engineers, and veterinarians. The USDA estimates that the agricultural industry each year through 1990 will need almost 14,000 experts in these areas. But, each year our colleges will only graduate slightly more than 11,600.

The prosperity of our industry depends upon attracting more men and women into agricultural studies. Indeed, a steadily increasing world population makes it crucial that we begin training now the experts that we'll need to help meet our food needs in the future.

Farm Bureau members can help by doing everything possible to spread the good word about the future of agriculture. County Promotion and Education committees, Community Action Groups, and the new Farm Bureau Speakers all have an important role to play in communicating a positive image about our industry.

Encourage a young person to go into agriculture or agribusiness today...it will pay big dividends for your industry in the future.

Seeds

- MFB President Jack Laurie attended a meeting of the Farm Program Study Committee at the AFBF office in Washington April 4.
- On April 7, President Laurie attended the MFB Equine Advisory Committee meeting at FB Center in Lansing and the MMPA Open House in Novi.
- President Laurie chaired a meeting of the Committee on Animal Agriculture at FB Center in Lansing April 8.
- On April 12, President Laurie led a discussion on the National Commission on Dairy Policy's findings and recommendations at the 43rd Annual Midwest Milk Marketing Conference, Novi. Laurie is also a member of that commission.

Jack Laurie

*Jack Laurie, President
Michigan Farm Bureau*

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Legislative Review

Diesel Fuel Excise Tax in Effect

Washington

■ Diesel Fuel Excise Tax —

Despite strong congressional support for repeal of the 15 cent per gallon tax on diesel fuel used on the farm, legislators failed to act before adjourning for Easter recess. So, on April 1 farmers started paying the tax from which they are actually exempt and will have to file for a refund next year. More than 250 House members and more than half of the Senate supported repeal legislation.

AFBF President Dean Kleckner met with U.S. Treasury Secretary Baker in a last minute effort to delay the tax, but according to the secretary, Congress mandated the change in the diesel fuel tax collection procedure in the budget reconciliation bill and altering the collection would violate the law.

In addition to farm operators, others affected include commercial fishermen, lumber, and oil operations. FB will continue to seek repeal of the tax.

■ High Risk Notification Bill —

Defeat of the High Risk Occupational Disease Notification Bill in the U.S. Senate was considered a big victory for FB and the agricultural industry. The proposed legislation would have mandated that current employers of workers who might have been exposed to some toxic substance during the past 30 years would be responsible for providing medical monitoring to such workers. If recommended by a doctor, employers would have had to offer workers a transfer to another job that might be less hazardous and at equal pay and benefits. If such a transfer were not feasible, the employer would have had to pay the worker a year's leave of absence.

FB applauded those senators who recognized that passage of the bill

would have created an explosion of lawsuits in the area of employer liability. Michigan's senators were not among the 52 members who voted against the organized labor-backed bill.

■ Trade Bill Nears Completion —

Two of FB's major concerns with the bill were resolved when conferees dropped the Gephardt amendment and retained the much preferred Senate trade provision. The conferees also agreed to allow the president to retain discretion in import relief cases involving fair trade, a major FB objective. At this writing, it is uncertain whether the final bill will get FB's support. The country-of-origin labeling provision, which FB supported, was dropped from the bill.

Lansing

■ **Truck Legislation —** A package of four bills, S.B. 700, S.B. 701, S.B. 702, and S.B. 703 has been introduced by Sen. William Faust, D-Westland. The bills are a substantial revision to existing regulations regarding commercial trucking. The bills deal with additional regulation and also additional revenue.

The bills define any truck, including farm trucks, over 26,000 GVW as a commercial truck. In addition, they require all loads be secured and covered and that additional equipment is required on commercial trucks. In addition, trucks under 26,000 GVW may also be impacted depending on the type of product which is transported. The bills also attempt to bring Michigan in line with the federal requirements for safety equipment which will be required on all new trucks and phased in for existing trucks. As introduced, the bills would have a substantial and broad impact on farm trucks with more regulations, permits, driver requirements, etc. FB

continues to work with the sponsor and the trucking industry to address specific agricultural concerns.

■ **Pesticide Bill —** H.B. 4674 has passed the House and is currently in the Senate Agriculture Committee. FB continues to express specific concerns with the bill, and it is anticipated those concerns will be addressed. The bill primarily regulates commercial applicators, but also has impact on farmers when applying restricted use chemicals.

■ **Commodity Insurance —** H.B. 4997 has passed the House and continues to linger in the Senate Agriculture Committee. The bill provides for a 1/10 of 1 cent collection fee on the value of grain sold to develop an insurance fund in the event of elevator bankruptcy or insolvency. Primary sponsors of the bill, Reps. Francis Spaniola, D-Corunna, and Gary Randall, R-Elwell, are strongly supportive of the referendum provision, thus allowing farmers to determine if the program should be enacted. Provisions of the referendum are that the decision is based on a majority of those voting who, in turn, represent a majority of the production. This is patterned after the P.A. 232 commodity promotion programs which have existed in Michigan for a number of years.

■ **Animal Industry Revisions —** S.B. 511 is currently in the House Agriculture Committee where the debate has focused on the indemnification of livestock. The bill attempts to protect the industry without being unduly restrictive and overburdening on the feeder industry. The original version of the act goes back to 1919 and has subsequently been amended numerous times. S.B. 511 attempts to update, modernize, and clarify the law dealing with the movement of livestock and poultry in Michigan.

(continued on page 14)

How Does the Food Get in the Store?

By Kimberly Marshall

How does the food get in the store? The simple answer to an old question: By a complicated process. A process which is totally dependent on farmworkers.

Farmworkers are needed to plant, cultivate, harvest, sort, package, and deliver fruit and vegetables to stores. Or, if the farm also has its own market, help keep the shelves full of fresh produce.

Don and Sandy Hill, Genesee County, own and operate a fruit farm with a farm market that is open year-round. In addition to themselves, and their son Dan, they have between 25 and 30 farmworkers from their local area helping them during different times of the year.

No Job Descriptions Here

"We do not have quote-unquote job descriptions here. People work wherever they're needed," said Sandy. "It may be opening day of blueberries and we're all out in the blueberry patch. Of course, during the fall and winter, we're inside sorting apples, baking, waiting on customers, whatever needs doing, that's it."

In the spring the Hill's start hiring people to help prune the blueberry bushes. Then, in summer, when their fruit trees start producing, they hire the majority of their help.

"Right now we have more people who want to come back to work for us than we have room for," said Sandy.

"The people who help us are highly valued. We need our employees and we'd like to pay them more. But, until agriculture generates more dollars, there's just no way to do it.

"I think there is something to be said about the quality of our workers

because they do come back and they will bend over backwards if we get into a pinch. For example, if we've got a heavy frost coming they'll just work right along with us to get the job done before there is crop damage," said Sandy.

Farmworkers are Depended Upon for Their Help

On the other side of the state in Ottawa County, Raymond and Pat Dietrich feel the same way about their workers. During their peak season, the Dietrichs have approximately 75 migrant workers, and their families, living on their farm.

"The majority of our workers return every year to work for us," said Pat. "We've had some coming seven years at least. They seem happy with us and we're very happy with them. They are very considerate people and most of them have families they bring with them.

"We have three different day-care centers in the area. The children are picked up by busses right at the farm and taken there. We are fortunate in our area to have the day-care to offer," said Pat. "I think another thing in our area which is really good is the medical assistance for the workers. Through a federally funded program, Sparta Health Center runs a special program for migrants during peak season. They have a mobile unit that goes from farm to farm and treats the migrants for any health problems. It's staffed with a nurse and a doctor is on call.

"We have very little turnover. Our biggest concern right now is with the new immigration law. We are going to be falling short of help, and we're worried right now that we aren't going to have enough workers," said Pat.

The new law will require farmers to verify that each of their workers

has a citizenship paper, or a Special Agricultural Worker (SAW) permit. The Dietrichs have been working hard to encourage their workers to get a permit. After November 1988, they will not be able to hire anyone who does not have proof of citizenship or a SAW permit.

"We depend on workers for help from April through October—which covers our asparagus, pickle, and fruit seasons," said Pat. "We just could not operate as we do without them."

People are More Accurate Than Machines

Marlin Outman, St. Joseph County, hires approximately 160 teenagers for three to six weeks in the summer to detassel corn, which is sold as seed.

"Most of our kids are repeat workers. We send out a letter every spring and ask them to get in touch if they're going to work with us again," said Marlin. "We get kids from as far away as New Orleans and others from big cities like Chicago and Detroit. They come to stay with relatives at the lake nearby and work for us.

"There's a lot of good kids in this country. I would like to get more people out here to watch these kids. You give these kids a chance to work and show them how to do it and they will, there's no problem.

"We're starting to get competition from the fast food places that can pay more per hour than we can. If it gets to the point where we can't hire enough kids to detassel the corn, we'll have to use automatic pullers," said Marlin. "High quality seed depends upon controlled pollination. Many seed companies prefer hand detassled corn because they feel people are more accurate than machines." □

Farmers Receive Warm Welcome In Nation's Capital

By Marcia Ditchie

The temperatures were cool, but the reception was warm for the 125 state and county legislative leaders who participated in MFB's 28th annual Washington Legislative Seminar, March 15-18, in the nation's capital.

FB Seeks Opportunities, Not Financial Aid

At the breakfast meeting with Michigan's U.S. representatives on March 16, MFB President Jack Laurie made it clear that the delegation of Michigan farmers came to the nation's capital for opportunities to strengthen their industry, not for financial aid.

"Traditionally when Farm Bureau comes to town we ask for an opportunity to visit with you about how we can make our industry better, how we can make the climate we operate in, and the markets we function in, more equitable," said Laurie. "We come to visit with you about how we can make the rules and regulations that guide us fairer and how we can be a stronger part of the total economy.

"We come to talk about issues like the diesel fuel tax that really puts us into a more uncompetitive position. We come to talk about issues like environmental questions, because we find ourselves being confronted daily with new concerns by environmentalists who don't understand what agriculture is all about and then try to give us rules and regulations that we find impossible to function within," said Laurie.

"These are issues that we're concerned about and they are issues you can help us with. They are issues that if we develop proper solutions, we can make agriculture

an even stronger part of the U.S. economy, the Michigan economy, our local economies, and just make our communities a better place to live."

Congressmen Discuss Federal Budget/Deficit

The federal deficit and the entire budget process were prime topics of discussion among the legislative leaders and the congressional delegation.

"The budget process is a disaster and needs enormous reform," Congressman Carl Pursell told the legislative leaders at the Wednesday breakfast meeting. "Congress needs to discipline itself in terms of achieving not only a balanced budget, but to establish some fiscal deadlines so we can get appropriations bills on the president's desk by October 1."

Congressman Bob Traxler said that the federal deficit reduction has to be a shared responsibility among

Congress, the president, and the people of the United States.

"It's going to require an understanding and a willingness on the part of the American public to say we're all part of the problem, we must all be part of the fair and equitable solution. With that understanding, there will be the political will. There is already the desire," he said.

Members of the congressional delegation also praised MFB for its efforts to strive for a market-oriented agriculture and seeking solutions to problems which affect the state's agricultural industry.

"The farm bill is working," said Pursell. "I commend Michigan Farm Bureau and their national organization for its market-oriented approach. The farm community is returning to viability and I congratulate you for your national public policy stance," he said.

Following breakfast, the legislative leaders were off to Capitol Hill to meet with their representatives or



Cheboygan County legislative leader Bill Collins (right) discusses some of Farm Bureau's priority issues with Congressman Bob Davis, R-Gaylord, at the Wednesday morning Congressional Breakfast.



The Australian Embassy hosted a meeting for the Michigan group where the legislative leaders learned about Australian agriculture and the country's agricultural programs.

aides for further discussion on priority issues before meeting with USDA officials in the afternoon.

Senators Focus Comments on Economic Issues

During the Thursday breakfast meeting, both Sens. Carl Levin and Don Riegle focused on the economic problems facing the United States and agriculture.

Sen. Levin said the 15 cent per gallon diesel fuel excise tax collection from farmers amounts to an interest free loan to the federal government.

"It makes no darn sense," he said. "It's forced borrowing from you. You're being short-changed unfairly without any rationale that I can justify. Hopefully, we're going to end that situation so we don't borrow that money from you without interest and then return it to you months later," said Levin.

Levin and Riegle are co-sponsors of legislation that would repeal the diesel fuel excise tax.

Levin also said that the 1985 Farm Bill, which is up for review, should be left alone. "We shouldn't change the rules again unless there is some overwhelming reason that requires us to do so," he said.

Sen. Riegle updated the legislative leaders on the trade bill, which is in conference committee. He reported

that the Riegle-Danforth amendment endorsed by FB has a good chance of being part of the new trade law.

"The amendment is designed to take down the unfair trade barriers in an orderly way," said Riegle, "so that we're able to get into those foreign markets and sell on a fair basis." The Riegle-Danforth amendment is an alternative to the FB-opposed Gephardt provision in the House bill.

Following the breakfast, the legislative leaders headed for the Australian Embassy for a meeting with Agriculture Counselor Tim Mackey, who discussed Australian agriculture and his country's agricultural programs.

Lyng Says 1985 Farm Bill Is Working

Secretary of Agriculture Richard Lyng was called to testify at a Capitol Hill hearing when the Michigan group met with USDA officials. Consequently, he requested a special meeting with the group Thursday afternoon.

"We have seen a turn-around in farm income the last couple years," he said. "There has not been a sharp turn-around everywhere, but generally speaking, the 1985 Farm Bill is working very well and the outlook for increasing farm income is

pretty good. Net farm income in 1987 was \$57 billion and export sales were between \$33-34 billion."

Lyng said he did not expect much change in farm legislation this year because of the presidential election.

Referring to the swampbuster and sodbuster provisions under the conservation reserve program, Lyng expressed his belief that the 1990 goal to have all plans filed with the Soil Conservation Service will be achieved. However, he does not believe that the 1996 target for implementing all plans will be possible.



USDA Secretary Richard Lyng

Ag Committee Leader Addresses MFB Group

"(Michigan) agriculture is very diverse and our Senate Agriculture Committee jurisdiction is also very diverse," Senate Agriculture Committee Chairperson Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., told the legislative leaders at the Friday breakfast.

Leahy told the group the committee is currently conducting hearings on FIFRA, futures oversight, rural development, soybean marketing loans, and world trade and exports.

"Those who say to you the costs of agriculture may be high, tell them to consider the alternative," Leahy said. "We are the only major power in the world able to feed itself. We are not dependent upon any other nation for food and we are still able to feed and protect many of our allies. It's something worth considering; it's also something worth preserving," he concluded. □

Cherries Linked to New Sausage

By Phil Calvert

Cherry pecan sausage? That's right. Unusual. Different. But true. Ray Pleva, owner of Pleva's Meats in Leelanau County, has people around the state raving about his new sausage delicacy.

So what prompted one of Michigan's most renowned sausage makers to try such an unusual combination as cherries and sausage?

Pleva has been a strong supporter of the cherry industry for many years. He lives near the heart of cherry country (approximately 20 miles northwest of Traverse City) and has entered a popular polka-playing sausage-making float in the National Cherry Festival for the past 12 years.

Pleva's daughter Cindy also had a strong influence on his decision to make cherry sausage. She is the reigning National Cherry Queen.

"Cindy convinced me that I should try making a cherry sausage," Pleva said. "Daughters can convince their fathers of most anything."

Now cherry pecan sausage has become the biggest seller at Pleva's Meats since its introduction in early February. According to Pleva, in the first 10 days he sold more than 250 pounds of the new sausage, using over 80 pounds of cherries.

Consisting of pork, red tart cherries, pecans, and "secret spices" wrapped in natural sheep casings, the mild sausage is now receiving acclaim from customers for its health benefits.

"Many people who have had difficulty digesting regular sausage are not having any trouble with this new product," Pleva said.

"There's something unique about the blend of ingredients. One fellow took some cherry sausage home to his wife, who has gall bladder trouble and normally experiences heartburn when she eats sausage," Pleva



The sizzle and aroma of cherry pecan sausage brought legislators from all over the State Capitol to the Michigan Cherry Committee booth for a taste of the delicious links at the Michigan Agriculture Conference legislative reception in February. State Senator Connie Binsfeld, R-Maple City, enjoys a piece of the cherry sausage with National Cherry Queen Cindy Pleva and Cindy's father, Ray Pleva.

said. "But, she ate this sausage and really enjoyed it. We've heard many such claims from customers since we started selling the cherry sausage in February."

Cherries have long enjoyed a reputation for having mysterious health benefits, yet little research has been conducted to confirm this theory.

So, to find out exactly how cherry pecan sausage stacks up against other foods and sausages, Pleva sent a few pounds of the delicious sausage for a complete analysis to the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) and to a professor at Michigan State University's Food Science and Human Nutrition Department.

"In mid-March we received word back from the MDA," Pleva said. "They told me that the analysis indicated that this is currently the leanest sausage made."

In addition to being lean, the sausage has the added nutritional benefit of the tart red cherries, which

are high in vitamins A and C and potassium.

Last year's large cherry crop and the potential for abundant yields in the coming years means finding new uses for cherries is crucial for success in the cherry industry.

"Many cherry farmers are pleased to see new, creative uses for cherries," Pleva said.

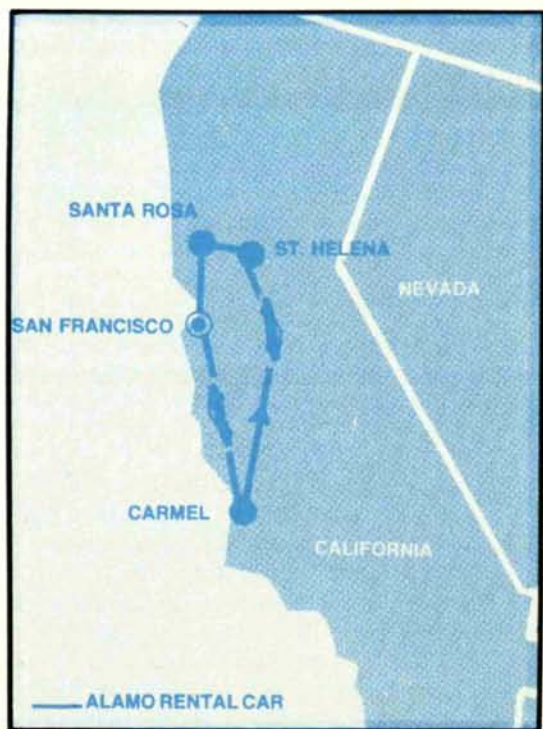
Finding new uses for cherries is only half the battle though. Getting consumer acceptance and successful marketing is the other half. With that, cherry pecan sausage is well on its way to becoming one of the cherry industry's greatest success stories.

"This sausage could be marketed nationwide, appealing to those people on low-fat, low cholesterol diets," said Pleva.

Cherry pecan pork sausage links can be ordered on the MACMA spring sale order form. Order deadline is May 11. □

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National Commission on Dairy Policy's Recommendations Focus on the Future

■ *The National Commission on Dairy Policy was created under the 1985 Farm Bill to study the milk price support program and the future of the dairy industry. Eighteen milk producers, including MFB President Jack Laurie, were appointed by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Richard Lyng to carry out this task by March 31, 1988. After 18 months of effort, including 41 meetings and hearings around the country, the commission submitted its recommendations to Congress and the secretary, on time and 25% under budget.*

In presenting their report, the commissioners emphasized that their proposals were not intended to be another short-term, quick fix that gets the dairy industry through the year without a reduction in the support price. Their report, they said, outlines a dairy policy for the future — a policy that will serve the industry well into the 1990s and beyond.

The following are excerpts from the executive summary of the report.

Ag Policy Consistent with Dairy Policy

U.S. policy should foster an economic environment in which milk producers — including those small and medium sized operations that make up the majority of producers — have the opportunity to receive a satisfactory return for their labor and investment. Those producers who are efficient, innovative, and industrious will prosper under the commission's plan.

Goals of federal dairy programs, especially those attempting to control production, should not be thwarted by efforts to keep producers in business when economic reality dictates otherwise.

The federal government should not attempt to define the term "family farm" for the purpose of targeting, or restricting, farm program eligibility. Targeting benefits to a particular size or structure of farm is inefficient and undermines the basic purpose of the federal milk price support program.

Agricultural and dairy policy should create an economic environment that makes profitability possible — but not guaranteed — for the nation's milk producers.

Price Supports Set by Formula

Market forces, together with adjustments in the government support price, should balance supply and demand for milk and dairy products. To determine the support price, an effective formula needs to be established in law. The formula must: account for changes in technology in an explicit calculation; take into account economic considerations in other agricultural segments; be able to operate several years without major adjustments; and have some latitude to account for shifts in supply or demand to prevent either a build-up of costly surpluses, or decreases, in production that result in shortages.

The secretary of agriculture should have discretionary authority to adjust the price indicated by the formula by 5% either upward or downward. However, in no case should the total price change — formula adjustment plus any change dictated by the secretary — be more than 50 cents per hundredweight in any one year.

The commission agreed to maintain the action level of 5 billion pounds of net Commodity Credit Corporation purchases. However, in the future, a specified percentage of commercial use should be adopted as the action level. Since 5 billion

pounds is 3% or 4% of commercial use today, then purchase volume should represent 3% or 4% of commercial use 10 years from now.

The Use of Production Controls

The use of a production control program on a permanent basis is not in the best interest of the dairy industry. Price adjustments should generally balance the market. However, if major price reductions were to be needed to balance supply and demand, then a production control program should be implemented in lieu of a major price reduction to reduce unneeded supplies of cheese, butter, and nonfat dry milk.

The commission believes the secretary of agriculture should have discretionary authority to impose controls when CCC purchases exceed the legislated action level. If projected CCC stocks are to be 2.5 billion pounds above the action level, the secretary should be required to implement a production control program.

Temporary implementation of production controls to reduce the federal deficit is not consistent with the commission's market-oriented philosophy. However, the commission acknowledges that such a step may be necessary to meet deficit reduction targets.

The commission determined that the most effective production control programs are either a dairy termination program similar to that carried out in 1986-87, or a two-tier pricing program paying producers a price for milk used commercially and a lesser price for marketings in excess of that amount. Depending on circumstances, one program may be preferable over the other. The commission provided the choice of programs to make it more difficult for producers to anticipate a specific
(continued on page 14)

“You Said It”

Here's how Community Action Group members around the state responded after discussion of the February 1988 topic, “Groundwater Quality Control.”

- Responses show that nearly half tested their well water for nitrates in the last year: Yes 42% No 58%
- A significant majority (80%) indicated that they obtain regular soil tests on their farms.
- Nitrogen use recommendations from soil tests are followed by 85% of the group members.

Getting Together

County FBs around the state are getting charged up to achieve the 1987-88 goal of organizing two new Community Action Groups in each FB county. The following counties have reported newly organized CAGs:

Emmet—Good Neighbors
Kent—Apples & Cream and Morse Lake

Missaukee—Mt. Richland Rangers and After Hours

Montcalm—Douglas Friendly Farmers

Shiawassee—Shi-West

Allegan—Earl's Group

Antrim—Top of the County

Tuscola—Pro-Farmers

Van Buren—B-Dale Group

Two groups in Wayne, and one each in Huron and Ogemaw have organized, but have not decided on a name.

Community Activities Manager Rebecca Jeppeson draws names from the tumbler each week (until July 13, 1988) to be entered in the Caribbean cruise/Florida vacation for two. The grand prize drawing will be held this summer.

These new CAG members are weekly finalists through April 5 for the Paradise Vacation:

Saginaw—Shirley Leach, Flint River Floaters

Kent—Pam Klein, Apples & Cream

Kent—Phyllis May, Apples & Cream

Jackson—Phyllis Haven, Country Lovers

County FBs at Work for You

Farm Bureau members in Washtenaw County think you have a “right to know” how using your county Farm Bureau can make a difference. They're marking the one-year anniversary of a local victory granting agriculture an exemption from a local regulation governing the handling of chemicals or other hazardous substances.

Leading the year long campaign on behalf of agriculture was Luke Schaible, who has been active in Washtenaw County FB committees, the organization's board of directors, and as county FB president. As early as March 1986, Schaible notified the county Board of Commissioners, that the Washtenaw County FB members were “adamantly opposed to the fee and penalty structure (of the proposal)... and are prepared to exercise whatever options are necessary to eliminate them.”

Working with a Washtenaw County law firm and legislator Margaret O'Connor, the county FB was able to obtain case law information and requested a legal opinion by the Michigan Attorney General to support their stand. After over a year of hearings, testimony, consultations, and information activities the Washtenaw County farmers won their exemption in March 1987. □

(Editor's Note: We are interested in receiving reports from county FBs which have used their local organization structure to address an issue of importance to farmers and rural residents. Please send your contribution to Rural Living Magazine, P.O. Box 30960, Lansing, MI 48909.)

Discussion Topic

Surviving Survival as a Family Farm—a New Member Benefit

You're coming through the tough times. Your farm will survive. You're making your farm work for you again, instead of the other way around. Now that you've come through tough times, what now? What is the future of your family farm? How can it benefit every member of your farm family?

To help answer your questions about the future of your family farm, Michigan Farm Bureau's Promotion and Education Committee is joining hands with Farm Bureau Insurance Group. Their efforts will result in a very special new benefit for MFB members: A one-day, Family Farm

Management and Succession seminar held at three different Michigan sites during January 1989.

Gordon Amendt, CLU, director of Special Markets for FBIG, describes the objective of the seminar as, “a way to develop a mutual understanding of managing survival as a family business—the organizational issues, the personal issues, and the technical issues every successful family farm faces. The subject matter is designed to be relevant to *all* family members: owners and successors, managers and non-managers, family members and spouses, parents and children.” *(continued on next page)*

Discussion Topic

(continued from previous page)

Seminar Presenters Highly Recommended

These seminars will be conducted by Family Management Services of Columbus, Ohio. This very experienced organization is highly recommended by Ohio Farm Bureau and other farm organizations.

The Family Farm Management and Succession seminars are really part of a two-phase program. Later this year, selected FBIG agents throughout Michigan will participate in an extensive two-day seminar that will sharpen their knowledge of the threats and opportunities in protecting the family farm. Seminars for MFB members and other Michigan farmers will take place in January. Based on the response of MFB members, these seminars could become an annual event conducted at different sites around the state.

This special program is really your idea. FB members often expressed the real need for MFB and its affiliate companies to provide adequate education regarding family farm succession planning. Membership wanted specific, understandable, effective methods to help solve family farm succession concerns; to make the transition from one generation to another smooth and cost effective. These seminars will accomplish these objectives.

Preparing Personal Information

With this learning opportunity approaching, Community Action Groups should begin making their future a little more predictable by asking the right questions and preparing their personal information prior to the January seminars.

Do you have some type of succession plan in effect for your farm? If you do, has it been reviewed recently—within the last 12 months? Do you have special information needs or unusual considerations or relationships that you'd like to see addressed in the seminars? What would be the information that could encourage you to begin the important job of succession planning? Would you like to learn how to manage the farm and non-farm relationships that form the complex

reality of running a successful family farm? Do you understand how to structure ownership for management and family harmony?

All of these questions and many more should be discussed by every family farm owner, manager, and family member. Do you have other questions and suggestions? Forward them to us. We will make this special membership seminar benefit the best it can be. Your ideas, your participation will make this continuing education effort a very important member benefit.

More specific information will be provided as this unique program on family farm and succession planning takes final form.

Discussion Questions:

- How many members of your group have made a family farm succession plan?
- What information areas would you like to see addressed in the seminars?
- How many members of your group would be interested in attending a one-day Family Farm Management and Succession seminar in January?

This article was prepared by Jack Stucko, director of Corporate Communications, FBIG.

Legislative Review

(continued from page 6)

P.A. 116 Tax Refund — Many farmers are receiving far less in their P.A. 116 tax refund than expected. For example, one FB member reports that he expected \$12,500, but received only \$3,800.

This problem results from state tax legislation that included a provision that prohibits the "carry backs or carry forwards of net operating losses or capital losses."

Farmers have suffered large losses the last three or four years due to the flood, drought, and the agricultural economic situation. S.B. 785 was introduced as a result of FB bringing this serious mistake to the attention of several legislators. S.B. 785 was given priority status and, if finally passed, will be retroactive to include 1987 tax returns.

School Finance Reform — As this is written, there is very

little to report as far as any solid agreement on how school reform should be accomplished.

The Senate passed S.J.R. "K", but it was not agreed to by the House. S.J.R. "K" would place a constitutional proposal on the November ballot which would:

- Increase the sales tax by 2% to be earmarked for education.
- Reduce the State Equalized Valuation (SEV) from the present 50% of market value to 25% for residential, agricultural, developmental, and timber cut over property and to 35% for industrial and commercial property (both real and personal). This reduction would only apply to school operating taxes.
- The state would reimburse local units for lost property tax revenues.

It is still expected that some type of proposal is likely to be on the November ballot for voter consideration.

Lansing legislative topics are reviewed by the MFB Public Affairs Division.

Agrinomic Update

(continued from page 12)

type of production control program and thereby circumvent the program's intent.

Any costs associated with a production control program, to the extent that they exceed normal dairy program costs, should be borne by milk producers. However, producers can bear those costs in ways other than through assessments on milk production. A reduction in the milk support price may generate a reduction in government outlays sufficient to fund a production control program. Assessments are neither warranted nor necessary.

This month's Agrinomic Update is based upon the National Commission on Dairy Policy's report.

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- Please indicate if you are a Farm Bureau member.
- The deadline for ads is the first Monday of the month preceding publication.
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- It is the responsibility of the advertiser to re-insert the ad on a month-by-month or year-by-year basis.
- The publisher has the right to reject any advertising copy submitted.
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