

# Family farm

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centers on the principle of supply management — market-oriented farm production, controlled to balance supply with demand, thus eliminating governmental manipulation of what Harkin supporters refer to as the "the so-called surplus" as a basis for dropping market prices.

Proponents of the suggested legislation favor it because it would eliminate all deficiency payment subsidies (tied to lower prices set by Congress in response to pressure from exporters during the 1970s), raise farm prices in the marketplace on all major crops and dairy, protect the export market share of American farmers through a bonus bushel program and foster debt-restructuring agreements. Elimination of subsidies would reduce costs to taxpayers, while the bill's supporters claim that increasing market prices would result in only a one-time consumer increase of 3 to 5 percent. To ensure that price increases to consumers would not hurt the poor, the bill reallocates a portion of the \$20 billion that would be saved in subsidies, to expand food assistance programs that have been drastically cut during the past six years.

Although the Harkin bill is vehemently opposed by the large grain corporations, it has been endorsed by the governing board of the National Council of Churches, the Congressional Black and Hispanic Caucus,

the Rainbow Coalition, the AFL-CIO, the National Conference of Black Mayors, and environmental and anti-hunger groups across the country. Directors of the National Conference in two large midwestern regions have passed resolutions supporting the Family Farm Act. And the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, in their November, 1986, pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All*, endorsed efforts to preserve moderate-sized family farms and called for strict ceilings on price-support payments, reform of tax policies favoring large farms or "non-farmers seeking tax shelters," soil and water conservation efforts, and fair wages and benefits for hired farm workers.

A statement released to members of the New York State Farm Bureau, a lobbying group that supports the 1985 Farm Bill, argues that the Family Farm Act would "surrender" to foreign competitors; fail to raise net farm income; foster protectionism; guarantee a higher cost of living for most Americans; require greater government spending for welfare programs and more bureaucratic control; hurt livestock producers; and require expensive periodic referenda for every program commodity.

Several local farmers who attended the Temple B'rith Kodesh seminar criticized both the slide show and the Family Farm Act. "My caution would be not to think there's just one solution (to the farm crisis)," said Peg Zimmerman of Canandaigua. "I take a strong opposition to the (Harkin) bill," added Zimmerman, who said she is

more concerned with problems that can be solved at the regional level.

"We really need a more regional farm policy," said Zimmerman, who agreed with both Spencerport dairy farmer Kathy Barkley and Canandaigua dairy farmer Norma Purdy that area consumers should buy such New York State products as cheese and sparkling grape juice. "The Farm Bureau basically wants to let the market operate in as natural a way as it possibly can, and get the government out of farming," said Zimmerman. "One of the concerns with the Harkin bill is that the present legislation is beginning to work," she added. "We should not expect consumers to accept another farm bill. This one should survive into the next administration."

Debbie Abbott, the wife of a dairy farmer in Onondaga County and a New York State Farm Alliance member, spoke out in support of the Family Farm Act, however, and a heated debate followed about who actually supported the bill and whether anyone should presume to speak for farmers except farmers themselves.

"Farming cannot be the sole preserve of the farmer, any more than the defense of this country can be the preserve of the generals," said Robert McKinney of the Center for Environmental Information. Consumers have a right to make informed decisions about the food they buy, he added.

Before seminar participants adjourned to watch actress Laura Clark, a member of the Land Stewardship Project, perform in Nancy Paddock's play, *Planting in the Dust*, the

mood of the seminar shifted to a more positive direction. "How can we work beyond the politics of different groups to do something about this?" said Barkley.

One participant had already synthesized a possible approach to solving partisan differences and beginning to create a unified farm policy. Farming, he said, should be viewed as a "state" — the components of which might include a state of mind, buying food in the state the food is grown in (rather than relying on imports) and the physical state of the food itself. "Food," he concluded, "should be a natural product." The goal of the family farm should be "the potato, not the process."

If so, Politics of Food coordinator Alison Clarke is on the right track. Seminar participants were served a dinner of entirely regional and mostly organically grown foods — a menu that surely might have made representatives of the divergent factions about as happy as they could be to sit down together and share the fruits of their common labors.

There was only one hitch. Several of the farmers had to leave before sundown, to attend to their chores. Yet anyone who stayed long enough to sample Politics of Food's upstate New York-grown apple desert surely agreed with the character Annie's assessment near the conclusion of Laura Clark's rousing performance: "The land belongs to itself. If anything, we belong to it ... We rise up awhile and sink back in. We've borrowed our lives from it."

# School planning

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tion has formally adopted "Shaping the Future," a two-year process of long-range planning and self-study.

More than two dozen schools have already taken part in the process, developed five years ago by a group of parents and teachers, according to Sister Anne Guerin, SSI, diocesan assistant superintendent for planning and developing.

"We'll aim to do 10 schools each year," she said. "That way we should get around to all the schools every seven years."

Identifying at least one school that could serve Hispanic students — particularly those with limited English-language skills — is one of the goals of the Task Force on Hispanic Concerns, which began meeting last November. Members of the task force, which includes representatives from each Monroe County parish with a sizeable Hispanic population, are also exploring ways to recruit more Hispanic students, school administrators, teachers and counselors for Catholic schools.

Only two of the county's five regional clusters — those in the southwest and the northeast — are specifically addressed in the implementation committee's report.

"The basic reason, as I understand it, is that these are the two sections dealing with schools that have some grave needs," said Father Siri-

anni, who is pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel Church.

No northeast-cluster schools have announced changes for the coming year. The implementation committee reports, however, that several school boards may yet decide to consolidate, particularly on the junior high level.

Representatives of the southwest cluster, which has suffered two school closings in as many years at St. Augustine's and St. Anthony of Padua parishes, have recommended that remaining school programs be stabilized and strengthened — particularly the regional junior high program at Good Counsel.

To date, Good Counsel's enrollment stands at approximately 75 students, according to Father Sirianni. The school will continue to recruit new students throughout the summer, using advertisements and displays at neighborhood events.

By this September, Good Counsel should have its own school board, comprising representatives from all five participating parishes, to oversee the junior high's operation.

The implementation committee report also recommended addressing the continuing needs of the parish communities at St. Augustine's and St. Anthony of Padua.

Father Mulligan, who is pastor at St. Anthony's, said he had hoped to have achieved a more proactive approach to school planning by this time. But he also pointed out that some school and parish administrators are beginning to consider consolidation from a vantage point of strength, instead of waiting until they reach a crisis point.

"We have taken some steps toward finding out how we can foresee these cases better," he said. "There's a continuing growth in the spirit of cooperation between parishes and the diocese."

## Auburn's St. Mary, Blessed Trinity schools to merge

Two Auburn schools are the latest in a string of diocesan Catholic elementary schools that have responded to new requirements from the New York State Regents' Action Plan by deciding in favor of junior-high-level consolidations.

Beginning next fall, St. Mary's and Blessed Trinity Schools will merge their sixth through eighth grades at Blessed Trinity.

Although the two school boards have yet to finalize financial and logistical details of the merger, Sister Walter Anne O'Malley, SSI, principal of Blessed Trinity, and Sister Dorothy Meisenzahl, SSI, principal at St. Mary's, announced the de-

cision earlier this month in a joint letter to parents.

The decision in Auburn was prompted by the state regents' increased requirements in such disciplines as mathematics, science and foreign languages, as well as by a need for more primary-grade space at St. Mary's and the presence of gym facilities at Blessed Trinity.

In a news release dated April 7, both principals also pointed out that a combined student body will allow for more social interaction, better use of personnel, expanded remedial and advanced placement programs, and new extracurricular activities.

Students will still be encouraged to continue identifying with their home parishes through sacramental programs, youth groups and sports teams.

Blessed Trinity School was created by a 1973 consolidation among three Auburn schools — St. Aloysius, Sacred Heart and Holy Family. Last year, more than 300 students enrolled in kindergarten through eighth grade at Blessed Trinity.

St. Mary's School has been moved twice since it was established in 1873 at a former carriage factory. The present school building, dedicated in 1961, serves 250 students in pre-kindergarten through grade eight.

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THANKS TO St. Jude, Blessed Mother, and Sacred Heart of Jesus for favors received. P.M.

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