

WEST TEXAS Country Trader

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The Castro County News
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EXAMINER
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The Slatonite
The Tulla Herald

Umbarger farm raises chickens old-fashioned way

■ 'Full Season' farm believes its chickens to be 'full flavored'

By GORDON ZEIGLER
AgReview Writer

UMBARGER — Full Season Farms, a country 'supermarket' catering to seekers of so-called "natural chicken," has found success off the beaten path on the Chris Wieck family farm near this tiny West Texas community.

Its success over three and one-half years of operation has proven that a mesh of old ways and direct farm-to-customer marketing succeeds when you're producing a product that consumers are hungry for.

Full Season Farms is a good example of how farmer and consumer both win by cutting out the middleman.

Wieck's Full Season Farm was the first small-sized chicken processors to go into business in 1994.

Since, it has become a beacon for throngs of chicken consumers from as far away as Lubbock, Amarillo, Hereford and surrounding towns.

Their experience in selling direct to the housewife has taught the Wiecks about some food qualities that consumers think are missing from store-bought chicken today.

"Some have simply told us they had trouble eating meat they bought in the store," says Mrs. Wieck.

In spite of its apparent wholesomeness, the mass produced chicken just doesn't satisfy the palate with the texture and taste of farm-fed chickens, she believes. And, many chicken consumers want that today.

Chris also discovers that

AgReview



COUNTRY MARKET -- Sara and Chris Wieck sell fresh chickens at a specialty meat shop located on their farm near Canyon and Umbarger.

direct marketing has helped him put out what he considers to be a superior poultry product at a price very close to today's supermarket fryer.

He admits prices have to be a bit higher, however.

"Our pork and beef prices are exactly the same as in the store," he explains. "But the reason we have to price the chicken the way

we do is to get a fair return on our money."

"We're not doing 100,000 birds a day," said Wieck. "To get a fair return on our labor it is higher. Some cuts are about the same price, but the average is 30 percent higher."

Wieck cites prices by one natural chicken firm in

See Farm, Page 4

Espy gives preview of renewed Water Act

AUSTIN (AP) — U.S. Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy says the Clinton administration is focused on bringing the most fundamental services to rural areas desperate for doctors, telephone lines and clean, running water.

Espy on Wednesday of last week addressed a conference at the University of Texas titled "Agriculture and Clean Water."

He praised farmers "as some of the greatest friends of the environment" and called on them to be the leaders in a voluntary effort to preserve water tables in rural areas.

See Water, Page 8

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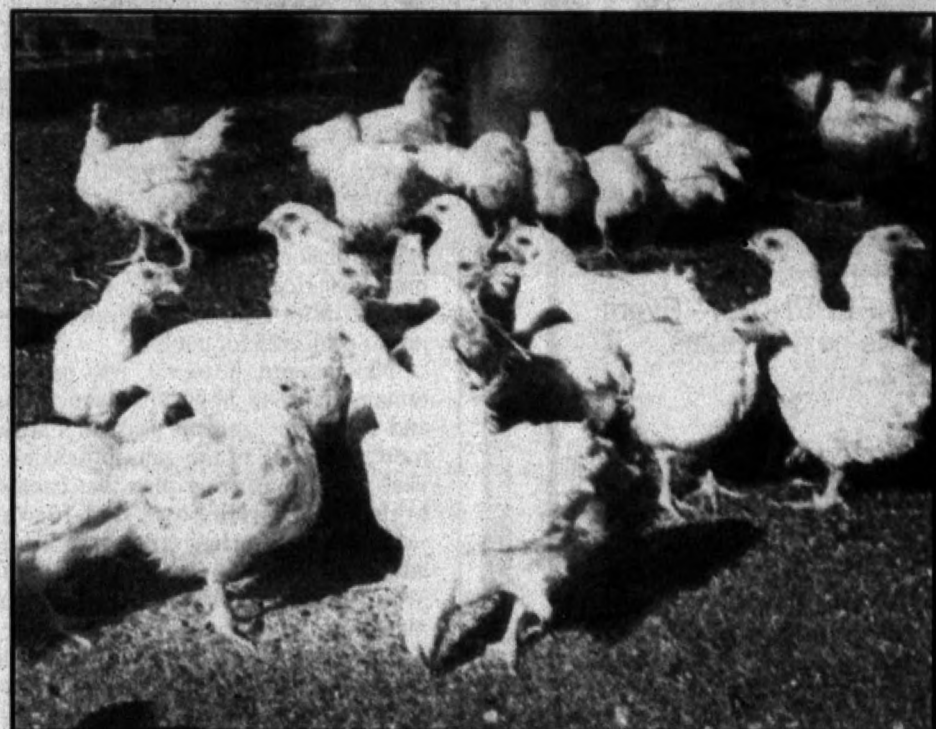
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Chicken farm unique

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TEXAS HUMAN NUTRITION CONFERENCE — Event will be held at Texas A&M.

FEB. 19

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FEB. 24

INTERNATIONAL LIVESTOCK CONGRESS — To be held in conjunction with the Houston Livestock Show at the Sheraton Astrodome Hotel.

MAR. 5-6

OSTRICH SEMINAR — S.W. Ostrich Breeders, Radisson Inn, call Kathy Holland at 764-3363.

Sizing up Texas ag for '93

By CARL ANDERSON
A&M Marketing Specialist

Texas' 1994 agricultural income may remain close to the welcomed improvement in 1993 over the year before. Last year, income received a much needed boost from higher beef cattle prices and a bumper cotton crop in West Texas.

This year, agricultural marketing statewide look favorable because strong prices for rice, corn, sorghum and cotton should more than offset slightly lower prices projected for cattle.

Net income, however, will probably remain stable as high production costs and lower government payments absorb most, if not all, of the gain from sales. A year-round marketing plan that captures higher crop prices by using forward pricing strategies appears highly advisable. With no set aside (ARP) for grain, good yields could drive prices much lower by harvest.

However, timely rains will be needed during the growing season. The western half of Texas started the year very short on moisture. Subsoil moisture is scarce over most of the state because of limited rain this winter.

Texas ranks second only to California in total ag sales. Because of productive soils, a favorable climate, diversified production, and an excellent market infrastructure — including favorable export facilities, the future of Texas agriculture looks good. Characteristics of progressive agricultural operations include diversification of enterprises, integration into businesses beyond the farm gate ownership in supply and service firms, and in some processing such as ginning, transportation and

storage. These operators use "top-notch" production and price risk management practices that are implemented through informed management decisions.

Texas' 1993 agricultural income is estimated to show a welcomed 8 percent increase over 1992 to \$13.4 billion. But, with higher farm and ranch input costs, the state's net ag income will probably rise only slightly to around \$3.2 billion, up from \$2.9 billion for 1992. Net income represents returns to owned equity and land, family labor, management and risk. Livestock accounted for almost 60 percent of total sales last year.

Cotton, the state's number one cash crop, recovered from the record loss in planted acreage in 1992 to a bumper crop of 5.15 million bales, which represents almost a third of the nation's production. As a result, cotton is expected to contribute some \$1.5 billion to ag sales, compared with about \$1 billion the year before. Although the corn crop was a record 219 million bushels, weak prices at harvest held income back. The wheat, sorghum and peanut crops were smaller with prices weak early in 1993. Rice income started the year slow but finished with the best prices in a long time, with a crop at 16.1 million cwt., 21 percent less than 1992. A poor rice crop in Japan triggered a price rally and opened the door for expanded rice exports.

Livestock income increased to around \$7.7 billion, largely because of higher prices for beef, broilers, eggs and hogs. Lower prices, however, reduced income from milk. Sales from sheep and goats were down because of weak prices.

Beef cattle, representing over 45 percent of the state's agriculture, gained in cash sales to total about \$6 billion, mostly because of strong prices. A large

beef cow herd and a strong cattle feeding business work hand-in-hand to boost the state's agriculture.

Cattle feeding in the Texas Panhandle provides a substantial amount of added value to the cattle ranching sector that produces calves in support of the feedlots. Also, the feeding of cattle creates a sizable market for Texas grain producers.

The greenhouse and plant nursery business, with an estimated \$650 million in receipts, remains strong and has grown to be the state's second largest crop in terms of cash sales. Vegetable and fruit operations are good. The 1993 pecan crop was especially large. Grower prices were low, while retail prices were high.

The ag-related activities — such as leases for hunting, fishing, outdoor recreation, horses for recreation, timber and exotic animals — are expected to pitch in some \$1 billion to total ag sales. Because the state's economy is experiencing a modest recovery, recreational activities are expanding as urban dwellers seek to enjoy nature and the "outdoors." Leasing land for hunting and fishing is a growing part of the ag economy.

Wildlife management is gaining considerable interest among landowners as the potential to increase income from harvesting wildlife looks bright. For example, with the supervision of Texas Parks and Wildlife biologists and cooperation of landowners, the wild turkey population is rapidly expanding across much of the state. The loss of the wool and mohair incentive payments is expected to be largely replaced by increasing the use of Texas' large land base for improved wild game production and resulting lease income.

Hog production should decrease 5 percent in 1994

The December Hogs and Pigs report indicated that pork producers actually farrowed 5 percent less sows during the September-November farrowing period than a year ago. This could be construed that pork producers' profits were being squeezed by the market and that they had chosen to cut back production.

But pork producers indicate they plan to increase the number of sows farrowed during the December 1993-February 1994 period by some 2 percent. What's up? Are they going to liquidate or are they going to expand? Probably for 1994, pork production will be slightly less than the 17.03 pounds produced in 1993, since in keeping with the decrease, expand, decrease, expand tendencies, pork producers indicate that sow farrowing intentions for the March-May period will be 3 percent less than a year ago.

It does appear that pork producers intend to reduce production in 1994, to produce about 16.7 billion pounds. The breeding herd size at 7.03 million head was the smallest reported since the March 1991 report. The trend to smaller breeding herds has been going on since peaking at 7.53 million head in June 1992. The September-November 1993 pig crop was estimated at 22.91 million head. This represented a 5 percent decrease from 1992 and a 2 percent decrease from 1991. The USDA December 1 Hogs and Pigs report had some interesting statistics concerning litter size. For the September-November period, pigs saved per litter was 8.5 head, which tied the record set a year ago. But, here is the interesting part — "pigs saved per litter by size of operation was 7.3 for operations with 1-99 hogs in inventory on December 1; 7.6 pigs per litter for operations with 1499 head; 8.0 pigs per litter for operations with 500-999 head; 8.1 pigs per litter for operations with 1,000-1,999 head; and 8.5 pigs per litter for operations with 2000 head and more." This shows some economies of size and the reason for the trend to larger-sized operations. Larger operations generally translate to fewer operations if supply increases are not accompanied with increases in demand. The smaller, less efficient operations lost out to the larger,



LIVESTOCK MARKET UPDATE

Dr. Ernie Davis

more efficient reduced supplies of Choice beef and pork in the first half of 1993. Also boosting 1993 hog prices were a recovering economy and another year of narrowing Ktail pork prices spreads.

The retail spread declined about 5 percent in 1993 and about 4 percent in 1992. The smaller retail price spreads indicate retail grocers are taking a smaller proportion of the dollars consumers spend on pork. Usually a declining retail spread occurs when retailers are featuring specials on a particular item. Because pork supplies have been abundant the past two years, retailers have been more prone to offer specials on pork.

Retail pork prices averaged \$1.98 per pound in 1993, the same as 1992. The winter storms of 1993 reduced pork supplies during the first half of 1993, but not as much as the impact on beef supplies. Consequently, per capita pork supplies were not affected as much as per capita beef supplies and retailers featured more pork specials during that period. During the last half of 1993, Choice beef supplies increased making wholesale beef prices more competitive to wholesale pork prices. Pork, therefore, became less attractive as a special feature and retailers switched to beef for variety. Pork retail prices increased and averaged about 3 percent above a year earlier in the fourth quarter.

The U.S. inventory of hogs and pigs on December

1, 1993 was estimated at 56.8 million head, down 2 percent from both a year ago and 1991. Market hogs numbered 49.8 million head, down 2 percent from 1992 and down 1 percent from 1991. U.S. breeding hogs totaled 7.03 million head, down 1 percent from a year ago and down 3 percent from 1991. The U.S. pig crop for September through November 1993 totaled 22.9 million head, 5 percent lower than last year and 2 percent below 1991. Sows farrowing during this period numbered 2.85 million head, 5 percent below the same period in 1992 and 4 percent below 1991 levels. The average litter size during the period was 8.05 pigs, the same as last year's record setting litter size. First quarter (January through March) of 1994 marketings will come primarily from the June through August 1993 pig crop and those market hogs weighing over 60 pounds on December 1.

The June through August 1993 pig crop was 2 percent less than a year ago and the number of pigs weighing over 60 pounds were down 1 percent. Also, towards the end of the first quarter, supplies of market hogs should be available from the earlier portion of the September through November 1993 pig crop.

The pig crop for that period was 22.91 million head, down 5 percent from last year. Market hog supplies during the first quarter should be 2 percent lower than a year ago. Second Quarter Marketings Second quarter (April through June) of 1994 marketings will come primarily from the U.S. September through November 1993 pig crop which was reported at 22.91 million head, down 5 percent. Towards the end of the second quarter, market hog supplies will come from the earlier farrowing of the December 1993 through February 1994 period. U.S. farrowing intentions for this period were to farrow 2.85 million sows, 2 percent more than last year. Market hog supplies for the second quarter of 1994 therefore, should be 3 to 4 percent below second quarter 1993 production levels.

(Dr. Ernie Davis, Livestock Marketing Specialist with Texas A&M, is an authority on hog markets)



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DiracTv entertainment programming will be delivered nationwide via satellite, and received by 18-inch satellite dishes installed in homes across the country. The units will be received no earlier than April, 1994.

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Farm

from Page 1

California whose rate is almost double the retail price.

"Our customers understand if they want chicken can drive a block and get it," he said. "The clientele we see in our store — from as far away as Texhoma, Lubbock, Lubbock, Plainview and Amarillo — have to drive out of the way. This shows us they like the product and it is not overpriced, shows us they like the product and it is not overpriced."

Sara Wieck discussed a family tradition of raising and processing family farm chickens stretching back almost two decades — long before their decision to go into business.

"We had always raised and dressed our own chickens," explained Sara Wieck. "We frequently heard comments from guests that our chickens tasted much better than what was available in the market."

From these reactions over the years came their basic business plan.

They've learned that old ways still work fine when it comes to the raising chickens, turkeys and beef, believe the Wiecks.

Chickens, turkeys and beef are all fed on the same real estate from which they are ultimately sold in finished form — as finished fryers and select cuts of beef. Their animals consume just about all the feed grown right on the Wieck farm.

The Wiecks became the first small to medium-sized operation in Texas licensed to process chickens. Outside their own planned operation, only mega-sized plants owned downstate by Tyson and Bo Pilgrim had survived in a market catering to Texas consumers.

Wieck processes 250 once a week while the majors are turning out more 100,000 daily.

The Wiecks believe the qualities that separate their chicken from the rest of the pack are easy to see:

Their flock of 400-500 Cornish Rocks peck for feed in pens located right on the ground. Unlike their cooped up cousins on some poultry farms, the Wieck chickens scratch eat and get plenty of sunlight out on their farm.

"The chickens are cleaner and healthier on the ground. You can actually see and taste the difference when you process and

cook the meat," claims Sara Wieck, who had experience providing farm-grown chickens for the family dinner table for years before the practice became a trademark of their new ag venture here in 1990. Their cattle are also coddled.

All Wieck cattle are hand picked for superior breed characteristics, and they seem thrive on a regimen of grains — and another Full Season Farms special ingredient, fresh turnips — all grown right on the farm.

Judging from their firm customer base, the Wiecks have developed a following among West Texas homemakers, caterers and restaurants over the past three and one-half years.

Amarillo restaurants including the Big Texan, Chez 'La A and Back to Eden serve their chicken.

From their meat counters, the Wiecks offer whole, cut up or split chicken. They also offer packs of boneless breasts as well as drumsticks. In the months of November and December, regular customers clamor for other farm-fed turkeys. Due to growing demand, they've added to their turkey flocks by 100-200 Broad Breasted White turkeys every year to meet demand.

Beef offerings include quartered beef, roast, steaks and hamburger. They put the same care into the beeves they raise, which are custom processed in the area.

They sell smoked, dried Swiss Sausage and Summer Sausage using their own family recipes passed down for generations, which are low in salt, and high on fresh garlic and pepper. Several Amarillo caterers purchase their product, and it is distributed through Eat Right Health Promotion Centers.

Their main outlet is their own on-farm market located right on their land.

Full Season Farms is open to customers every Saturday. During the week they are glad to serve customers by appointment.

For them, the direct marketing of products has added a special dimension to farming that both husband and wife seem to like.

"We really like selling our product that way," explained Mrs. Wieck. "Our store is right here with our plant, just north of our house," Sara explained.

Meeting the public has been especially rewarding, she says.

Her husband agrees.

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Farm

from Page 4

"You get to meet your customers," he says. "I had always heard some say they don't like to deal with the public, that people are hard to deal with. That's not the case."

As a farmer, he says he missed out on the opportunity to sell commodities direct to the end user.

"You go to the auction and sell our livestock or to the elevator and market through regular channels," he said. "It's a lot different when you have 300 or 400 customers instead of two."

It's not unusual, Weick says,

to see a family come out to purchase 125 chickens and a half beef to stock the family freezer. Sara says the typical customer comes out every week or two to shop for chicken breasts, roast and steak.

She remembers the week the venture started — it was kicked off with a very small advertisement in the Canyon newspaper.

"It was a real simple ad," recalled Sara. "We said, 'We'll raise chickens like you used to raise if you ever lived on a farm.' We said we'd process them for them if they'd place an order. And that we'd deliver them on a certain date."

Sara said she was very surprised by the response.

"It just confirmed to us that there was a market for this type meat, that people were hungry for this type thing."

Many things go into to making Full Season Meat than meats the eye at the meat counter, explains Weick.

It all has to do with some technical practices in processing — chickens are hung up briefly to drain, ensuring very little blood residue, especially around the bones. Birds are scalded, and, unlike in automated plants, all birds are hand-eviscerated, ensuring that visceral contents are sanitarly separated from the meat by hand. Automated evisceration heightens the possibility of bursting, Weick believes.

Before eviscerating, chickens are sprayed with a mist of water, not floated in water vats. This eliminates the process of adding water content to the meat, which consumers pay for in a per-pound basis.

After processing, birds are quickly chilled, butchered, frozen, then vacuum packed and quick-frozen.

"The difference in the finished product is in the texture of the meat," claims Sara. "It is not spongy or mushy. And a lot of those qualities result from how it is processed. WE designed our plant to eliminate a lot of these problems we heard about in large plants."

Despite his success in poultry, Weick says his mainstay continues to be the cattle business.

Spin-offs of his poultry operation include the fact he now farms about half the number of acres he used to. What he does now is just as intense as farming, if not moreso. But it has helped him achieve other goals.

"Chris likes the meat business," explains Sara. "It is important to us to do what we like and have time for our family. So that is how we structured our business."

"We like the fun of living in a small community," she adds. "Dealing with public is something I really like to do. We want to be able to make a living and have the kind of lifestyle that is pretty stress free and flexible. The personal goals we have set are happening for us."

Daughter Salem, 15; and Seth, 13; work in Full Season Farms, and

frequently drive a tractor on the farm, but are also busy with other high school activities.

"This fits in absolutely perfectly with our operation," explained Chris. "I couldn't ask for anything more. The income and return and everything has exceeded what we expected."

Spinoffs have been many.

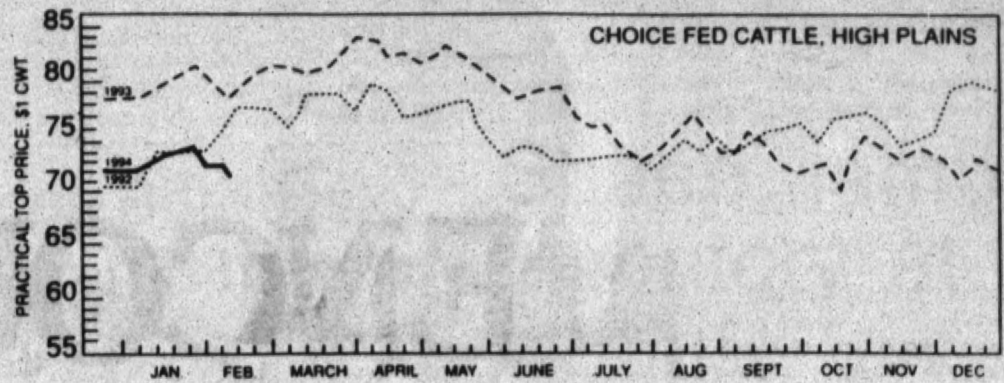
"Our soil has improved," commented Mrs. Weick. "We are cutting down on the number of acres we farm and still making a living. Our soil quality has improved — we grow everything on the farm. Our animal waste is recycled. We have been able to apply better management techniques."

The Weick family has farmed near Umbarger since around 1920. His grandfather was a German immigrant who met and married the daughter of Swiss Immigrants and settled in the Texas Panhandle.

Chris farmed all his life, entering his first farm partnership at the age of 14. The couple began their family farm about 17 years ago, shortly after Sara's graduation from Hereford School and Chris from The couple has been very active in community and ag activities over the years.

Their new business was a member of the Texas

Business Highlights



Courtesy Texas Cattle Feeders Association, Amarillo

Choice fed cattle, High Plains

The above report reflects market activity through Feb. 11.

Department of Agriculture's Taste of Texas promotion and they have appeared at numerous industry trade shows.

Apart from his poultry business Chris is involved in cattle raising and is a volunteer fireman in Umbarger. He has served on the board of the Texas Farm Bureau.

Sara has just completed her term as president of the Canyon United Way Campaign. She recently was appointed as the first woman to fill a position on the Palo Duro Soil and Water Conservation District Board. She is active in the Canyon Independent School

District PTA organization.

Crops raised on the farm are used in their entirety as feed. That includes wheat, triticale and some milo. They put up their own ensilage for cattle. They also raise turnips.

"We feed turnips because cattle really gain on that and it is a good winter crop," she said.

They also raise the hay grazer, Sudex.

As for the future, they say they would be pleased to see their children come back to help run the business, but that's up to them, Weick said.

"We just want to keep

this going at about the same size," he says. "If the children ever came back to help run the business, we might consider an expansion at that time."

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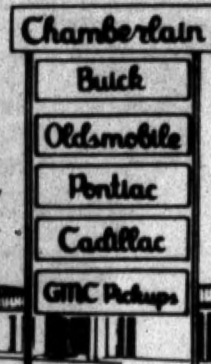
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Babbitt to give councils say on rangeland policy

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Interior Department said today it planned to give local advisory councils broad authority to develop rangeland protection plans, including policies on grazing.

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, in a speech in Colorado, said the proposal reflects the view that "those closest to the land, those who live on the land, are in the best position to care for it."

The proposal would require that the local advisory boards include a cross section of representatives from ranchers and timber interests to sportsmen and

environmentalists.

Babbitt, in an address to the Society of Range Management in Colorado

Springs, denied that the approach represents a retreat in his rangeland protection plan to be unveiled

next month.

"The process ... is not one of compromise. It's been one of consensus

building. ... The destination hasn't changed, but we have taken a different path," said Babbitt.

A&M's James Bordovsky wins top research honors

HALFWAY — James P. Bordovsky of Plainview has received the 1994 Vice Chancellor's Award in Excellence for Research Support from the Texas A&M University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.



BORDOVSKY

THE AWARD was given at the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station 1994 Science Conference at Texas A&M Jan. 11.

Bordovsky is an agricultural engineer and associate research scientist with the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station in Lubbock. He was cited for his achievements in testing variations and management criteria for Low Energy

Precision Application (LEPA) irrigation, a concept being installed by growing numbers of irrigators.

He was also integrally involved in development of the Multi-function Irrigation System and several innovations in chemigation technology.

A NATIVE of Mart, Bordovsky is co-author of more than 60 publications resulting from his research, as well as the co-holder of three U.S. patents and one foreign patent.

He began working for the Lubbock station in 1978 as a research agricultural engineer after receiving his master's degree in agricultural engineering from Texas A&M in 1978. He had received his bachelor's degree there in 1976.

Sheep, lamb inventory at all time low

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. sheep and lamb inventory at the first of this year totaled 9.08 million head, down 9 percent from the record low set the previous year.

The value of sheep and lambs totaled \$638.6 million, also 9 percent below a year earlier, said a recent report by the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

The average value per head was \$70, 10 cents above a year earlier.

"Stock sheep inventory decreased to 7.24 million head on Jan. 1, 1994, down 11 percent from 8.14 million last year," the report said. "This is the lowest level ever recorded. Ewes one-year-old and older, at 5.79 million head, were down 10 percent. This compares with the previous record low of 6.42 million head set last year."

Sheep and lambs on feed for the slaughter market in the 27 major producing states totaled 1.84 million head, down 2 percent from a year earlier.

The 1993 lamb crop of 6.31 million head was down 13 percent from 1992, comparing with the lowest level of 7.21 million head set in 1988.

The 1993 lambing rate was 98 per 100 ewes one-year-old and older on hand, compared with 102 on hand as of Jan. 1, 1992.

The number of operations with sheep during 1993 totaled 98,230, down 3 percent from 1992 and is also a record low.

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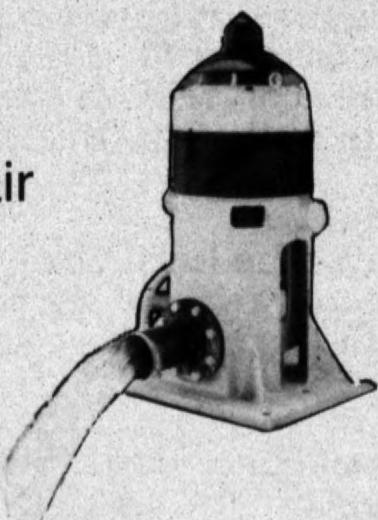
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Writer uncovers story behind American french fry

By TIMOTHY EGAN

C. '93 New York Times

OTHELLO — More than 30 years ago, the king of fast food hamburgers and the patriarch of potatoes came together for a meeting that would change the American meal and create a new breed of corporate farmer.

Ray Kroc, founder of McDonald's nationwide restaurant chain, and J.R. Simplot, the food processing and chemical magnate in Idaho, forged a deal to make perfect french-fried potatoes — upright, bright, cheap and free of molds.

They would look the same whether they were sold on the Jersey shore or in a drive-through in Idaho.

The potatoes would grow

in the dry, volcanic soil of the inland Pacific Northwest, then be washed, sliced, cooked, and frozen in factories in this region before being shipped to fast-food outlets from sea to shining sea.

The combination of cheap federal hydroelectric power and irrigation water made this desert region perfect for the operation, and by the mid-1980s, more than six billion pounds of potatoes were being processed by 10 big factories owned by different companies in the Columbia River Basin, providing America with most of its french fries.

But the process of making one fry look exactly like another has come at a big

cost, according to a new report on the potato processing industry.

The demand for uniformity has created an industry that is heavy on chemicals, wastes half of every potato it processes and pollutes underground water supplies, according to the Columbia Basin Institute, a research group in Portland, Ore.

Its study was financed in part by grants from the Ford Foundation, the Aspen Institute and the Bullitt Foundation of Seattle, which is concerned with environmental issues in the Northwest.

"If you want to produce most of America's french fries this way, you should have to pay the costs — social, environmental and other," said Bill Bean,

founder of the institute and co-author of the study. "We've got a uniform french fry, but it came with a lot of hidden costs."

Industry leaders say much of the criticism is wrong or misleading. They say they have cleaned up many of the water problems, investing millions of dollars to better dispose of the water used to wash and cook a perfect fry.

They say they provide more than 4,000 year-round jobs, among the best-paying in the low-skill farm sector, mainly to Mexican immigrants.

And they say they have kept alive rural communities that otherwise might have had severe unemployment and a declining tax base.

The french fry production industry here has prospered in part because of public works projects that produce cheap electrical power and bring water to what was once an unpopulated desert.

More than 50 years ago, President Franklin D. Roosevelt envisioned the Columbia Basin as a haven for Dust Bowl refugees who could farm the desert with

the help of irrigation water provided by federal dams and reservoirs.

The laws were written so that people who own and run small farms would be the primary beneficiaries of federal water projects coming from Grand Coulee Dam and other big dams on the Columbia River.

But over the last 30 years, the number of small farms in this region have all but disappeared, replaced by large corporate farms that have the necessary capital to pay for the heavy fertilizers and chemicals needed in growing the thick Russet potato that is used for making french fries.

Before the mass marketing of frozen fries, about 1,000 farmers grew a variety of potatoes on 20,000 acres in this area; now, half as many farmers grow mostly Russet Burbank potatoes on 115,000 acres.

The irrigated farm land in the Columbia Basin is second only to the Imperial Valley of Southern California in size and the amount of support it receives from the federal government. State funds from Washington and Ore-

gon were also used to lure the processors here.

Bean says these subsidies are "an unnecessary and gratuitous use of public funds."

The french fry producers say they probably would have come here even without the government enticements. But as long as the subsidies were offered, they said, they took them.

"We would be the first to admit that we're not perfect," said William Voss, president of McCain Foods, a large processor that received a \$5 million loan from Washington State. "But this is an industry that has brought thousands of well-paying, year-round jobs to this region."

Community leaders tend to agree with Voss.

What the government has helped to produce, in large part, is an industry that might never have come into existence if Americans did not have such a love affair with burgers and french fries.

Before the perfect fry was created, most fast food restaurants employed teenagers to wash, peel and cook fresh french fries.

WATER

From Page 3

Under a plan known as the Reauthorized Clean Water Act, Espy said the government hopes to enlist local help in locating and repairing impaired watersheds. The plan would be aided by federal dollars and take up to 15 years to be completed, he said.

Espy also said Congress is working on a plan originated by U.S. Rep. Charles Stenholm, D-Texas, aimed

at downsizing the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

About \$2.3 billion can be saved through maneuvers that include downsizing the number of agencies comprising the USDA from 43 to 30 and by cutting 7,500 staff years, according to Espy aides.

"We have 11,000 county offices and there are only 3,600 counties and parishes in America. Very gently, we must cut down," Espy said.

Espy encouraged rural

cities to apply for federal assistance through a program that will target enterprise zones and provide about \$38 million to build infrastructure and create jobs.

As he concluded his 25-minute speech, Espy plugged Clinton's widely debated health plan as "full of tremendous incentives" for rural areas.

"There are incentives for emerging young doctors to relocate in rural areas," Espy said.

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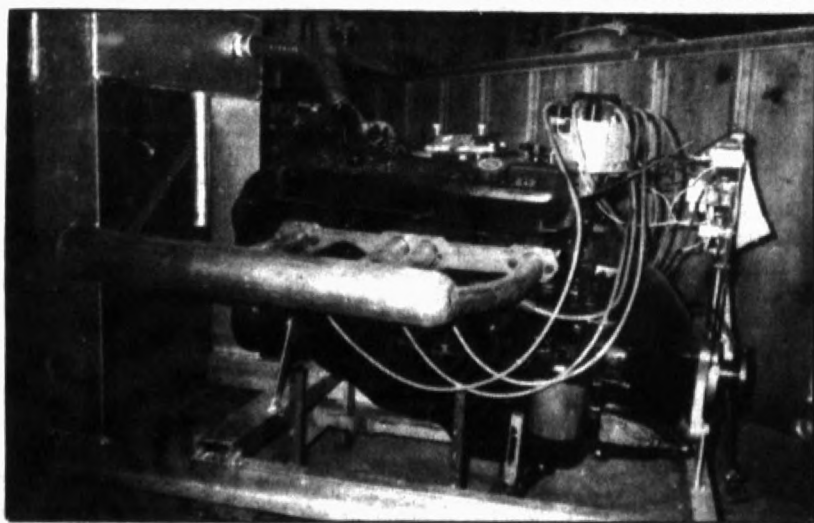
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