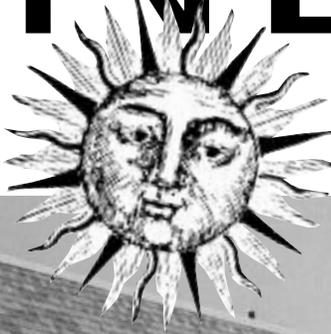




United States
Department of
Agriculture

NEWS

USDA Solar!!



USDA Service Center, Walpole, NH—first ever solar office.

A new USDA Service Center in Walpole, New Hampshire, becomes the first ever to be located in a structure that is 98 percent heated by solar energy. James McConaha, State Director of the USDA Farm Service Agency, said the former Contemporary Systems, Inc. facility in Walpole has been selected to be the new home of the Cheshire-Sullivan County Farm Service Agency and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The Cheshire County Conservation District will also be located in the new office.

The CSI building is a contemporary structure that was completed in 1980 and which incorporates a hybrid solar heating system. The building uses three different solar methods: an active solar-air collection subsystem, a sunspace-greenhouse and a passive direct-gain window wall. Together they contribute about 98 percent of the heating requirement, with the balance supplied by the heat generated from internal lighting and fans.

In tests conducted over the course of two years by the U.S. Department of Energy, the passive system provided

18 percent of the seasonal equipment heat load, the sunspace-greenhouse system supplied 18 percent and the active solar heating system supplied 63 percent. Two independent rock storage bins, holding 100,000 pounds of crushed stone each, provide 6-7 days of extended heat storage. State of the art monitoring and temperature control systems maximize the efficiency of the system.

The 3,700 square-foot building was originally built without a backup heating system and operated as such for 12 years. When the decision was

continued on page 5

Message from the Administrator



FSA Role On EQIP

Now that we've got the sign-up for production flexibility payments off to a good start, it's time to take a look at another major assignment we were given in the 1996 farm bill. That is the new conservation provision known as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program—EQIP, for short.

As Directed by Secretary Glickman, NRCS will establish policies, priorities, and guidelines for the EQIP with FSA concurrence. FSA, with the responsibility for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), will continue to develop policy for that program with NRCS concurrence. County FSA Committees and Conservation Districts will work together to implement the programs locally. The State Technical Committee, including the State FSA Committee, will provide advice on criteria and priorities at the State level. FSA will be responsible for delivering EQIP locally using the framework developed between the two agencies.

This framework provides for expanded local cooperation between Conservation Districts, County FSA Committees, NRCS, and other partners to improve working relationships and obtain greater environmental benefits.

The EQIP framework provides for the County FSA Committee to partner with NRCS and Conservation Districts on local workgroups to assess natural resource conditions and needs, identify priorities and resources, develop proposals and make policy recommendations. County FSA Committees will accept applications, approve contracts, and disburse funds to producers.

Recent FSA emphasis on strengthening conservation partnerships has helped target cost-share dollars to areas where the greatest conservation benefit to correct significant resource problems could be achieved. Working with local natural resource groups and governments, farm

groups, and others can help identify problems and implement solutions in well-defined areas, such as watersheds. This collaborative effort, with COC's taking the lead, differs from the piece-meal approach where practices are approved without fully considering the resource needs of an entire area.

In recent years, steps have been undertaken by several States through Water Quality Incentives Programs (WQIP) to ensure maximum benefits from ACP funds. In California, the State Conservation Review Group process was expanded to include broader representation by numerous commodity and resource groups to identify the crucial agricultural resource needs for the entire State. In Kentucky, several recurring ACP practices are not being offered while special emphasis is being placed on practices to promote new solutions to conservation programs. In Massachusetts, special efforts are underway to expand the use of Integrated Crop Management on small farms where tomatoes and other specialty crops are grown.

These are examples where FSA took the lead to work closer with NRCS, build partnerships with others, adjust an existing program to meet local needs, and work with new customers in many areas. These efforts show that we can meet the needs of conservation stakeholders throughout the country, while utilizing the FSA delivery system to obtain tangible results locally.

An FSA and NRCS interagency team developed this framework, and their original model served as the foundation for implementing EQIP. USDA Farm Bill Teams continue to identify issues as they relate to EQIP and other programs. As issues arise, input from State and County FSA staff and their NRCS counterparts will be used to develop sound policy and workable procedures.

Grand Buntrock
Administrator

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A Family That's Faithful To Music

They are as much a part of the music ministry in area churches as the hymnals in the pews. In fact, there are probably few other local families who have had a greater impact on setting the tempo for religious services in their home areas than the Child sisters: Sandra Broaddus, Veronica Childs, Vera Fox, and Lisa Jackson.

The four daughters of Louis and Virgie Childs, who live near Massaponax in Spotsylvania County (VA), share their musical talents with 10 churches in the region. Every Sunday morning—and during midweek services and revival meetings—the women tickle the ivories in sanctuaries in Fredericksburg and the nearby counties of Caroline and Spotsylvania.

They direct youth, women's, men's, and male-female choirs—more than 300 people in all. They schedule dozens of performances each month for Sunday services. They also apply their musical abilities in other arenas: one gives piano lessons in her home, another sings with three choral groups, and two play the organ.

Granted, the Childs sisters all came from the same family tree, but their musical styles branch out in several directions.

The oldest of the family's four daughters and two sons, Sandra is considered the most traditional pianist. Veronica, on the other hand, has a classical style. Vera is considered the most gifted of the group, and according to her family, a daredevil. Lisa, the youngest, is still refining her style, blending a mixture of all the above. Lisa has been playing the piano since she was nine years old—a total of approximately 15 years. "I didn't really



The Childs sisters: from left, standing, Sandra Broaddus, Lisa Jackson; seated, Veronica Childs, Vera Fox.

want to play in the very beginning," stated Lisa, "but since all my sisters played, I felt obligated. I came to enjoy it a year or two later. Now, I feel as though something is missing when I don't play."

For those people who have a talent and don't know how to develop it, Lisa says that you only live once and if you have a talent, you shouldn't let

it slide. "If you don't at least try using your talent, you will never really know how good you could have been. That's something that you may regret."

Lisa, who works at FSA's Human Resources Division/Training and Development Branch, played at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Massaponax, Virginia, before providing music at Long Branch Baptist Church in Woodford.

Japanese Officials Visit Texas Farm

Wayne and Betty Knox of Haslet, Texas, graciously hosted a tour of their home and farm for two young Japanese city officials, Akihiro Majima and Tetsuo Watanuki in February. The tour was arranged by the Fort Worth Sister Cities Organization through the Tarrant County Farm Service Agency (FSA) Office.

Eiko Briggs, interpreter from the Fort Worth Japanese Society, and the two officials, met Pat Campbell, CED, and Laura Gooding, PA, at the Tarrant County Office. The group then traveled to the Knox home.

Both Mr. Majima and Mr. Watanuki work for the City Office of Nagaoka, Japan. They were in Texas to participate in the Cowtown Marathon, and wanted to take this opportunity to visit with government agricultural officials related to their work in Japan. They wanted to know about agriculture in this part of Texas and how American farmers manage and raise their agricultural products.

Wayne Knox hosts an "Ag in the Classroom" show for 4th grade students in the Fort Worth school system at his farm each May. He has served on the FSA committee for over 20 years and has farmed in the county since 1948. Betty assists him on the farm and is currently mayor *pro tem* of Haslet.

After brunch, the group toured the farm, learning about equipment, wheat fields, pastures, cattle, sheep, and horses. It was a real treat for the young men to sit on a horse and pet a baby calf. They were amazed at the size of the fields since an average rice farm in Japan is only 2.5 acres.

At lunch, the Japanese were so impressed with the size of their salad they took a picture of their hand next to it to show their friends at home. Carrots in their muffins were also a surprise. After lunch, the group went back to the Knox home where the guests presented their hosts with a gift of thanks for their hospitality.

It was a wonderful and educational experience for all involved in the tour to examine the differences as well as similarities in each country. The Japanese were amazed at the size of everything. We, as Americans, sometimes lose sight of how blessed we really are. It only took a short visit to bring that into clear focus.

日本の市職員
テキサスの農場を視察



Akihiro Majima and Tetsuo Watanuki check out farm equipment on the Knox farm.

It's Baaaaak!!!!!! Goat Sucker Update

In our May/June '95 issue, we brought you a story from Puerto Rico about a creature blamed for the strange deaths of many goats, sheep and even a bull. The cause of death was vampire-like—a small perforation found on the skin from where blood was drained from the entire body. The Goat Sucker legend was born.

In December '95, the *Washington Post* headlined, "Mystery Creature Ravages Puerto Rican Livestock." Imagine our surprise—from *FSA News* to the *Post*! The *Post* reported that the beast, known in Puerto Rico as the "chupacabras," had been seen by several residents. One said, "It was about three or four feet tall with skin like a dinosaur. It had bright red eyes the size of hen's eggs, long fangs and multicolored spikes down its head and back." This poor man lost his family goat—its blood drained from its neck and body disemboweled. Other sightings have brought wildly dissimilar sightings of the "animal."

This is not the first time the island has dealt with tales of bloodthirsty monsters. But this scary bloodsucker has left a high count of animal deaths—claimed at 1,000—and the citizens are afraid. The beast started with small animals, but what if his blood lust grows? Are humans next?

The government responded to all the hoopla—an investigation was started, one reason being the potential impact on tourism. It doesn't take much to scare off visitors seeking sun and glorious beaches. The mere whisper of a bloodsucking vampire stalking the countryside is enough to bring terror to the hearts of every hotelkeeper on the island.

As this issue of FSA News was going to press, other goat-sucker sightings were reported throughout Mexico. The front page of the Mexico City Times reported "Goat-Sucker Fever Sweeps the Nation" along with an artist's conception of the bug-eyed, winged, demon-like animal that is spreading hysteria—and skepticism—across the land. As in Puerto Rico, no

one's bagged—or even photographed—the "animal." A government task force reported, "...pollution is now so bad it's driving ordinary animals mad, giving them the behavioral trappings of crazed alien creatures." Reports of goat suckers have been around for 20 years, and it looks like there's no end in sight. Fact or myth? We leave it up to the reader to decide.

A group of 200 wary, but determined, townsfolk and police searched the hills for the mysterious creature. They didn't find him, but they claimed success anyway, hoping they scared the goat-sucker away to more remote areas.

The more rational residents are certain there is a down-to-earth explanation for the carnage, perhaps an escaped zoo animal or exotic pet let loose. Much like the Loch Ness monster, the stories and legend abound. Local tabloids have picked up the story, and a new alcoholic drink has been invented called the chupacabras because, "nobody knows what's in it."

In January, however, reason prevailed. Autopsies of the many dead animals found nothing unusual as veterinarians concluded the marks appeared to be dog bites. Other victims died from pneumonia and hepatitis. "But the victims' cardiovascular systems were all intact, contradicting reports they had been sucked dry of blood," said Hector Garcia, director of veterinary services.

So, as the stories lessen, so does the fear. Let's hope the goatsucker has moved on, and serenity (and tourists) can return to the beautiful island of Puerto Rico.

continued from page 1



made to rent out the facility, an oil fired-heating system was installed but, according to CSI owner John Christopher, it has required only 50 gallons of oil in the last three years. Christopher expects the heating oil requirement for the USDA Service Center to run about \$100 a year.

The facility was extremely popular during the 80's and was visited regularly by presidential candidates seeking a coveted win in New Hampshire's first in the Nation primary. With the renewed concern about dwindling fossil fuels and the threat of global warming from the use of these fuels, McConaha said he hopes future candidates will visit the Center.

The new office is expected to open in July and farmers and landowners in Cheshire and Sullivan Counties are invited to come in for a tour or to sign up for USDA programs.

Spokane's AmeriCorps Project EAT

By Brenda Rouse

The Spokane, WA Farm Service Agency (FSA) became the headquarters of an AmeriCorps Project called EAT (Environment, Agriculture, Technology). The existence of EAT is the result of town-hall meetings throughout the State that included farmers, ranchers, and others involved in agriculture. FSA understood the need to share information about agriculture and supported a program that would involve the general public on this multi-dimensional subject. Project EAT members work to provide the community and, most important, school children grades K-12 with agriculture industry facts.

Acting as project coordinator for this year is Scott Hallett, District Director for FSA. Team members are Louise Belsby, Robyn Meenach, Kimberly Novakovich, Brenda Rouse, Jennie Wagner, and Bob Wolf. Their diverse backgrounds include bachelor's degrees in education, agronomy, agricultural economics, food science and technology, and a master's in

animal science. Four of the six members are actively farming or ranching wheat, barley, hay, oats, cattle, and some hogs.

An intense two-week training began in October 1995 that covered program guidelines, project direction, and expectations of ourselves and the industry. Sessions were conducted by individuals involved in Ag in the Classroom, a summer course that instructs teachers about agriculture. We exchanged extensive information on aspects of environment, agriculture, and technology.

In creating our project objectives, we defined agriculture and determined what we wanted to impart to our students. With this mission, we contacted teachers who had participated in Ag in the Classroom training or a Farm Fair tour in Spokane. Then we wrote letters to all fourth and ninth grade history teachers about our program. We focused on these grades because Washington state requires history at these levels, and agriculture has played a role in that.

Project EAT designs lessons by individual request, but will include hands-on presentations. We integrate agriculture into any school curriculum—language arts, history, science, economics, health, and math. Some lessons include an agriculture overview, agriculture history, careers in agriculture, soils, plants, water, animals, conservation, and nutrition.

Since October, our messages have reached more than 24 different groups and 2,600 people. We participated in a local Ag Expo, visited numerous schools, spoke to commodity groups, and presented skits for State and county members, directors, and executives. Our program receives positive receptions and evaluations by those we visit; people enjoy hearing and learning about this diverse topic. We continue to welcome future requests for our services.



Louise Belsby at St. Mary's School teaching a wildlife lesson.



Robyn Meenach at St. Mary's School teaching a hog lesson.

Faraway Places

The exotic cities of Bombay, Calcutta, and Delhi, India are not usual places to find FSA staffers hard at work. That's what happened when a team led by Vicki J. Hicks, FSA's Assistant Deputy Administrator, Commodity Operations, (DACO) visited India to evaluate several initiatives recently implemented under the P.L. 480 program (also known as Food for Peace). Accompanying Vicki were Ben Myatt, DACO Packaging Specialist; John Sharpe, Federal Grain Inspection Service; John Wise, Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), representing the milling industry; and Diana Twede, PhD., Michigan State University (MSU) School of Packaging.

The P.L. 480 program, which is administered jointly by USDA and the Agency for International Development (AID), provides food to approximately 120 million needy recipients in more than 90 countries overseas. It is the most extensive ongoing food assistance program in history. India is one of the largest recipient countries under the program, receiving corn soy blend (CSB), bulgur wheat, and vegetable oil.

DACO has recently implemented several initiatives to improve the performance of packaging for CSB and vegetable oil, while reducing program costs. The team traveled to India to evaluate the effect of these initiatives and to determine if additional steps should be taken to further improve the program. They were joined by India-based personnel from the recipient agencies CARE and Catholic Relief Service (CRS), who distribute the food aid in India.

Highlights of the trip included jeep and train journeys to visit various CRS and CARE food distribution centers outside Calcutta and Bombay. Observing the distribution of USDA-supplied food,



Team members Vicki Hicks, John Wise, John Sharpe, and Ben Myatt visit with Mother Theresa at her Mission of Charity orphanage in Calcutta.

first hand, to needy mothers and children was truly inspirational, according to Vicki and Ben. "It reinforces our commitment to ensure that commodities are delivered safe, sound, and wholesome," Ben commented.

Vicki added, "During the last couple of years we've made significant improvements to the entire food aid distribution system, from improved packaging, to added inspections at the mills, to the vessel loading observations that are conducted at U.S. ports. It's good to see that our efforts are not in vain."

The team agreed that the trip was beneficial and will result in even more improvements in delivering food to impoverished people around the world.

There were many new experiences for the group—from strange smelling and tasting food, to overwhelming masses

of people, to "Road Warrior" type traffic. Transportation in India, both city and country, is a constant swirl of vehicular and non-vehicular objects. When on the road, you must contend with overloaded trucks with no tail lights, motor rickshaws (three-wheeled taxis), bicycle and human-pulled rickshaws, motor scooters, goats, dogs, people, dancing bears, camels, buses, and thousands of the usual cars. In addition to the moving traffic, there are a number of stationary obstacles, including cows, beggars, street repair crews, double-parked cars, elephants, and trucks.

India has its own set of road rules. You are fine as long as you don't hit the cows, which can be ANYWHERE in the street and are considered to be sacred. In fact, all traffic flows around

continued on page 8

continued from page 7

the cow, just like it does (presumably) in a traffic circle. Other animals or people often are not so lucky.

Perhaps the most important rule of the road is how to pass. If you want to pass any moving object, honk your horn. Every other vehicle will start honking, too. He who is the loudest and largest gets the right-of-way. Everyone else moves to the left, that is, unless they are in a hurry, and everyone in India is in a hurry. If the other vehicles and livestock don't yield to the loudest horn, that vehicle enters the lane of oncoming traffic anyway and passes, scattering everyone and making two lanes into three or more. This is especially fun when you are in a flimsy motor-rickshaw, with a semi bearing down on you.

We're happy to report all members of the team returned safely from India and are probably ready for more adventures—as soon as they recover from this one.



Vicki Hicks distributes USDA commodities outside Calcutta.

Walton County Makes History

By Donald Carroll, CED, Walton County, FL



The Walton County FSA Committee members pictured (left to right) are: Brenda Simmons, Ella Smith, and Maggie Russ.

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has always had a large percentage of female employees on the rolls—many as Program Assistants, so I'm used to working with a lot of women. But I participated in a first—at least for me as the CED in Walton County where I have served for almost thirty years. On January 17, the county committee meeting consisted of three women and me! Only in recent years have we seen significant numbers of females elected to the County Office Committee (COC). Never in the history of the Florida agency have we had an all-female County Committee.

When our elections were held in December 1995, J. A. Wilkerson was elected in Local Administrative Area (LAA) 1. When he was hospitalized with pneumonia, his first alternate, Ella Smith, served in his absence. Ella and her husband own and operate a broiler poultry facility. She manages and furnishes much of the labor necessary for operating six poultry houses. This is the first time she has been elected as an alternate of the FSA county committee.

Brenda Simmons was elected in LAA 2, and became a member of the COC. Brenda and her husband grow peanuts, corn, cotton and soybeans, and also operate a small earthmoving contracting business. Brenda has served as a county committee member since 1992. She works part time in a timber-buying business office and is also busy raising two teenage daughters.

Myles Ray was elected to serve in LAA 3. Due to his sudden death in late December, the first alternate, Maggie Russ, assumed the position. Maggie and her husband, Phillip, farm corn and vegetables, raise cows and hogs, and grow timber on their old family farm in the Red Bay community. She also served many years as a county school bus driver while raising her children. She served several years as an alternate to the FSA County Committee prior to assuming her current position as vice-president.

Walton County is proud to be the first in Florida to have an all-woman County Committee!