

# Troubled Farmers Still Laugh

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From the multitudinous regulations of innumerable government agencies, farmers occasionally can extract a laugh or two. Maybe it's their sense of humor that keeps them in business.

Last spring when farm strikers were demanding 100 percent of parity, a takeoff by an unidentified writer was circulating. It dealt with a new government program called "Parity at the Market Place," with the acronym PAMP, chosen after the committee had rejected "Parity in the Market Place" for obvious reasons.

In the script, a government man was trying to hire a friend from the domino parlor for the "Parity Patrol" to check up on sales of farm products to be sure they came up to parity.

The bureaucrats were working up parity scales for everything from goats and honey bees to catfish and parakeets. A committee would determine how much production of each would be needed and give farmers or ranchers their share in the form of marketing certificates.

The man from the domino parlor didn't join the Parity Patrol. He said he was allergic to paper work.

The spoof led a couple of Oklahoma farm organization leaders to compile spurious marketing certificates, however.

"When wheat is grazed out or baled for hay, this certificate must be processed to deduct the amount of grain that would have been harvested if it had been harvested for grain," one rule said.

Meticulous records were specified for "Transaction One," "Transaction Two,"

and so forth, each year for beef cattle and calves sold.

An eastern writer turned out a parody on creation of the earth by Congress. The bill said "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit upon the earth," and the House Firmament Committee was in agreement.

A fierce struggle broke out, however, when it was amended to add "Let there be oil." Members disagreed on where it would be placed. They also had a big argument over what man would look like.

The proliferation of pronouncements about things alleged to cause cancer has spawned a variety of takeoffs.

A livestock organization figured out a human would have to eat 1,500 pounds of beef liver daily in order to derive as much DES residue as was fed to laboratory mice in research.

During the saccharin dispute, it was calculated that a person would have to drink several hundred bottles of artificially sweetened soda a day to equal the dosages given lab animals.

A Nevada agricultural worker carried the idea further, applying it to pickles. He noted in a long diatribe that "Every pickle you eat brings you nearer to death. Nearly all sick people have eaten pickles," especially pregnant women.

"All pickle eaters born between 1859 and 1869 have wrinkled skin, lost most of their teeth, have brittle bones and failing eyesight — if the ills of eating pickles have not already caused their death."

From California came a similar item,

noting that "99.9 percent of the people involved in air and auto accidents ate carrots within 60 days preceding the accident." It was observed also that juvenile delinquents came from homes that served carrots.

Back when DDT was plentiful and mosquitoes were scarce, a story was published about a massive air drop of cats in Borneo. Allegedly, the World Health Organization had wiped out malaria by controlling mosquitoes with DDT, but this created other problems.

It was said that DDT residues accumulated in cockroaches, which were eaten by long-tailed lizards called geckoes. These were eaten by cats, which couldn't survive DDT. Loss of both cats and geckoes resulted in plagues of rats and caterpillars, which the importation of a new generation of cats would remedy.

The Department of Agriculture has launched a campaign for "integrated pest

management" (IPM), intended to control insects without chemicals. The editor of a farm chemicals magazine got into a hassle with officials for calling IPM "Imperial Potomac Madness."

Apparently, it's hard to do a takeoff on wordiness of federal regulations. About the only way to get a laugh out of "bureaucratese" is to translate it into understandable language.

Meaningful definitions appear from time to time, however. "Idiolectuals" was

coined to describe "overschooled, undereducated nitwits who have solutions for all problems."

It's good that we can laugh at ourselves and our government. But the increasing number of regulations and controls that are emanating from Washington really aren't funny.