

## Agriculture by Marcia Merry

### 'Meat and milk will make you sick'

*Food faddist "experts" rationalize the loss of U.S. farm output potential.*

A new phase of propaganda has begun from the food faddist camp about the dangers of animal protein in the diet. In mid-July, a series of articles appeared in the major U.S. press, on the theme "Research is Linking Too Much Protein to Disease" (headline article in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, July 16). The so-called research review was released by the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a Naderite group that has consistently opposed nuclear power and advanced technology R&D for industry, agriculture, medicine, and the environment.

The theme of the article—and the accompanying propaganda campaign—goes far beyond the questions of cholesterol, lactose, or other food elements that are undesirable for certain individuals. The new theme is "Less Steak, More Pasta," and that meat should better be used as a flavoring, and milk as merely an ingredient (in cereals products), not as a food. A July 15 *Washington Post* cooking column aimed at "Yup-persons" is typical: "CSPI recommends eating at least one meal a day with little or no animal protein. It urges us to learn new ways to prepare grains, legumes, pasta, and vegetables, and to use meat and poultry only as condiments." Imagine ordering "aura of steak" as a side dish, and corn and applesauce as the main meal.

The argument that meat and milk are harmful, advanced by the "experts" at the Center for Science in the Public Interest, is bogus. But first, consider the timing of the campaign against meat and milk.

The number of meat animals nationally (cattle, hogs, and sheep) has now dropped to the lowest level since the early 1960s. Domestic output of beef, lamb, veal, and pork per capita has dropped drastically.

Temporarily, in recent years, imports of these products disguised the decline in home output. However, the lower-valued dollar now commands fewer imports; at the same time, farmers abroad as well as at home, are going under, and sources of exports are falling.

For example, the meat herd numbers in Canada are shrinking under the worldwide depression conditions.

The number of milk animals has fallen. Over the last 15 months of the federal "Dairy Herd Termination Program," at least 1.5 million milk animals were eliminated. Milk output has been reduced so significantly that there now is no reserve capacity (unless farmers were induced to rev up production again).

Every pound of the current "surplus" dairy product stocks in government storage (under the milk marketing stabilization program) are committed for distribution in one of the national school or charity distribution programs.

When school opens in September, some urban areas will be short of milk, and have to ration. As it is, the only reason the lack of output is not visible, is that more and more households are impoverished and unable to afford the high-quality animal protein in their diet—meat, ice cream, dairy products, whole milk, that used to be routine. Therefore, there appears to be

plenty on the shelves because millions of people can't afford to buy meat and dairy foods.

The anti-meat and -milk lobby is so activated, they filed a request on July 21, to have the Food and Drug Administration reclassify certain categories of milk to attempt to deter the public from wanting normal-fat-content (3.2%) milk, or even 2% fat-content milk. The 2% fat-content milk, and the 1% fat-content milk they contend are misleading if called "low fat." They contend that only skim milk (no fat) should be called "low fat."

The argument being made against meat and milk by the faddist "experts" is that since individuals with weak kidney functioning benefit by reducing the throughput of nitrogen-containing waste products from meat and milk, then healthy people of all ages and sizes should also reduce their meat and milk consumption.

Their contention is that whatever the daily calorie requirement for an individual, little of it should come from animal sources—neither animal fats nor proteins.

Consider: If you think this way, then the decline in the ability of the United States to produce food is supposed to be "good for you," and you won't demand emergency action to restore the productive potential of U.S. agriculture.

The real issue of kidney functioning in the population at large is a matter of the aging process, except in individual cases of illness and malfunction. In populations that live long, the decline in kidney function shows up. According to researcher Mackenzie Walser of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, "If there were nursing homes for old rats, they'd be full of animals with kidney disease. . . . All laboratory rats developed this as they age."