

Smörgåsbord



Harold Johnson
Editor

Jerusalem artichoke firm under investigation — Marketing tactics of AEFS, Inc., a Marshall, Minn.-based Jerusalem artichoke sales corporation, are being investigated by attorneys general in 12 states and by the federal government, according to a copyrighted story in the Feb. 19 issues of *The Farmer* and *The Dakota Farmer* magazines, published by the Webb Co., St. Paul, Minn.

The article alleges that, according to law enforcement officials, "AEFS is under close scrutiny for suspected fraud, which may total as much as \$150 million by the end of this year."

Officials of AEFS, after trying unsuccessfully through the courts to stop mail delivery of the magazines in which the article appears, have filed a \$400,000 libel suit, charging that the article "will cause tremendous loss of reputation and sales". Defendants are the Webb Co., editor Robert Rupp, and freelance writers Mary Nelson and Michael Vadnig who wrote the article.

According to the authors, focus of the alleged investigation of AEFS by federal and state officials is "whether or not AEFS claims of a viable market for Jerusalem artichokes are accurate. Or, as many investigative officials contend, is it a massive pyramid scheme aimed at funneling large sums of money to persons controlling the corporation?"

Here, excerpted from the article, are comments from specialists who seriously question viability of the market for artichokes beyond seedstock:

Bob McElrath, Minnesota Department of Agriculture marketing specialist: "The product may have some value, sometime, but I don't see any commercial market for it now or in the foreseeable future. . . . The company is making claims that, if the supply is there, demand will be created. Elements of this same strategy were used by the snake oil salesmen in the 1800's. You have to have demand for the product. Beyond seedstock, there is no demand."

George Marx, dairy scientist at the University of Minnesota's Northwest Experiment Station, Crookston: "Artichokes do not make very good quality forage. While the protein is a bit higher, energy is much lower. Problem is, people who grow artichokes for alcohol can't make forage until the tubers mature. By that time, the forage is stemmy, the tops have frozen and have lost much of their nutritional value. The forage is unpalatable. You can't have good forage and harvest maximum yields from tubers, too."

Joanne Slavin, University of Minnesota extension nutritionist: "I'm not convinced there is a market of any size for Jerusalem artichokes in human nutrition. . . . They don't provide any food value. . . ."

Asked about the alleged investigation and magazine article, Jerry Knapper, director of public relations for AEFS, told FARM SHOW as this issue went to press that:

"The article contains many errors which we will

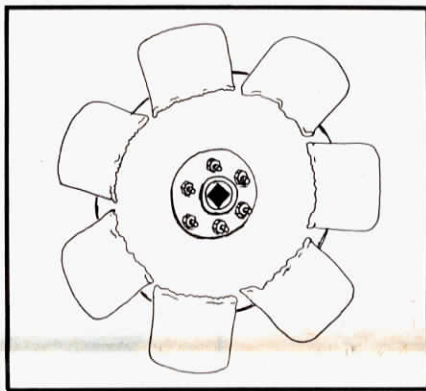
be challenging in the libel suit. Among them is the charge that we are being investigated by 12 states. Our suit will also challenge the article's implication that officials of AEFS are involved in a pyramid scheme to funnel large amounts of money to themselves."

Knapper emphasized that, "AEFS has nothing to hide. Our firm has created 60 to 80 new jobs within an 80 mile radius of Marshall. We invite any and all interested parties to visit with our people, hear our story and to tour our facilities here in Marshall."

Inventor of the year — Australia's "Inventor of the year" is Pleasant Hills farmer Kevin Terlich who came up with the idea of welding rectangular "spades" 150mm by 100mm on his disc blades.

His invention, called the Roto-Spade, has the potential to revolutionize disc cultivation in Australia, according to judges for the National Farm Inventor of the Year contests, sponsored by *The Land* magazine, of Sydney.

In a report on his invention in *The Land*, Terlich says the modified discs enter the soil much better than plain discs. They're also effective in cutting through stubble in minimum tillage applications.



His Roto-Spade disc was developed from years of experimenting with different tillage ideas. "I tried all sorts of ideas," he said. "Then, one day my wife made a quip about putting spades on discs. That was the idea that led to my invention and, since then, everything I tried worked."

Terlich says two machinery companies in Australia have expressed interest in producing his invention commercially. An American company has also made inquiry, he told *The Land*.

Planting crib corn — When money is in short supply, the idea of planting corn seed out of the crib (F_2 seed) comes up. Although F_2 saves some money for seed, it costs farmers substantial corn yields at harvest, warns Garren Benson, Iowa State University extension agronomist.

In 1981, ISU corn breeders coordinated research to see how F_2 seed, saved from a field that was planted to a single cross hybrid in 1980, would yield in comparison to its single cross parent. The test involved three locations (Ames, Kanawha and Columbia, Mo.) and three single cross hybrids and their F_2 counterparts.

The single cross hybrids yielded 151 bu. per acre. The F_2 produced 103 bu. per acre, a yield reduction of 32%.

"Results were very consistent for hybrids and locations," notes Benson. "The minimum yield reduction was 27% and the maximum was 35%. At one location, corn grown from F_2 seed produced 137 bu. per acre. But the single cross hybrid yielded 202 bu. per acre.

Concludes Benson: "Cheaper F_2 seed is obviously a poor choice, even though there is concern for reducing crop production costs this year."

Used equipment bargains — "The next three months may offer the best opportunity in many years to get a good buy in used equipment," says Lee Schwanz, editor-publisher of *Buying for The*

Farm. "The slump in used tractor, implement and combine prices probably is in the 25 to 50% range."

Schwanz's survey of farmers throughout the U.S. generated these comments on the used equipment situation:

" . . . I saw a good IH 1466 tractor sell for \$10,000," said an Illinois farmer. (The current Marshall's Farm Equipment Guide puts the average retail price of that tractor at \$16,650 and the wholesale at \$13,230.)

" . . . Prices at farm sales are down more than I can believe," reported a Nebraska farmer. "I recently saw an IH 806 in good shape sell for only \$2,300. (The book value of this tractor is \$5,853 retail and \$4,682 wholesale, Schwanz points out.)

" . . . Prices are down 25 to 40%," said a New York farmer. "A Case 1970 sold for \$4,300." (Book retail value on it is \$8,646, wholesale is \$6,916.)

How long can farmers hold out without buying new farm machinery?

Schwanz says, based on his survey, they're generally prepared to hold out for as long as eight years. "And that's not counting a couple farmers who said they could hold out forever," says Schwanz. "On tractors, 33% said 'five years'. However, 50% were in the two to three year range. The average was 3.3 years. On combines, one farmer said 10 to 12 years, but there were 18% who felt they will need to trade up this year. The average felt they could get by for 3.7 years. Buying plans are more immediate on implements, sparked by farmers who are changing tillage systems. The survey showed 22% plan to buy some piece of equipment this year and 37% expect to buy over two years."

The February issue of *Buying for The Farm* lists the asking prices for used tractors from many locations around the country on most major tractor makes and models. If you'd like a free copy to use as a guide when you attend farm auctions, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, *Buying for The Farm*, 2645 Maple Hill Lane, P.O. Box 363, Brookfield, Wis. 53005 (ph 414 782-5525).

Wooden-legged pig — A tourist was passing slowly through the countryside admiring the beautiful fields and livestock facilities when he noticed a pig with a wooden leg. Being an inquisitive sort of fellow, he stopped his car, backed up and drove into the farmer's lane.

The farmer was just coming out of his barn as the visitor drove up and said, "I see you have a pig with a wooden leg. Well, I never saw such a thing and I thought perhaps you might tell me how it came about."

"Well, I'll tell ya," replied the farmer. "That's the smartest pig I've ever had. Why, the other night my wife and kids and I were upstairs sleeping when the house caught on fire. That pig broke through the fence, walked right into our house, came up to our bedrooms and grunted and snorted and squealed until he woke us up and we were able to get out safely. Yes, sir, that's the smartest pig I've ever owned."

"That's nice," said the visitor, "but that still doesn't tell me why that pig has a wooden leg."

"Well, I'll tell ya," repeated the farmer. "That's the smartest pig I've ever had. Why, the other day, when our whole family was away, some burglars came and tried to break into our house and rob us."

"And you can guess what happened. The pig charged out through the fence and chased those burglars away! Yes, sir, that's the smartest pig I've ever owned."

"Okay, okay," grumbled the visitor, "but that still doesn't tell me why he has a wooden leg!"

"Well, I'll tell ya," said the farmer. "If YOU had a pig that smart, would YOU eat him all at once?"

(From FARMLAND NEWS, Archbold, Ohio.)

The hiding place — Looking for a safe place to hide money, stamps or an important document? Put it in your family Bible. Those who open the Bible wouldn't steal from it, and those who would steal would probably never open it.