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FARMPARK IS A LAKE METROPARKS FACILITY.

Farmpark's mission is to help our urban society understand how farmers raise food, fiber, and other products that sustain and enhance human life.

Farmpark Almanac is published three times a year by Lake Metroparks.

This publication is sent free to Farmpark members. For an annual subscription, please mail a \$10 check or money order (payable to Lake Metroparks) to: Farmpark Almanac Subscription, Lake Metroparks Farmpark, 8800 Chardon Road, Kirtland, Ohio 44094.

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ISSN 1545-3162 ♻️ Printed on recycled paper.

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FROM THE HILLTOP

The Cost of Farmed Products is Allusive

BY ANDY BAKER, FARMPARK ADMINISTRATOR

2007 was a good year for farmers across the United States. Prices and profits were higher than any time in the last thirty years. But they were not evenly spread across the farm landscape and the high prices that grain farmers received were offset in part by rising costs of equipment, fertilizer, seed and land. While energy costs and the demand for ethanol made a big impact, it varied based on their importance in the production costs of specific commodities. Livestock producers are directly impacted by rising feed costs. For example, in egg production, feed accounts for more than half of the cost, so changes in the cost of corn can have a major impact.

Another important factor in 2007 was the increasing demand for higher quality foods in countries like China and India, which made food supplies tight around the globe. Tight food supplies mean that weather and marketplace disruptions will have a bigger impact on food prices. For example, the rising price of milk is fueled on the demand side by an increase in domestic cheese consumption and increasing worldwide demand for cheese (think of McDonald's cheeseburgers in China), while a drought in Australia, a large dairy exporter, has decreased production on the supply side.

As we experience increasing food prices, it is important to keep in mind that what consumers pay does not always correlate to what the farmer receives. Other market forces and intermediate steps add



much of the cost particularly in processed food. With the cost of corn doubled, the value of corn in a box of corn flakes is only 6 cents. The surest way to make your food dollar get to the farmer is to buy direct. This summer you can do that on Wednesdays at the Farmpark Farmers' Market. Whether here, at other farmers markets or at farm stands throughout Northeast Ohio, your purchase will help direct how and where our food is produced.