

Agriculture

'Innovation Agriculture' looks to farming alternatives

Ontario is launching a new group to promote the production and marketing of alternative crops and livestock, Agriculture and Food Minister Elmer Buchanan announced at a meeting of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association.

The mission of "Innovation Agriculture" is to work closely with producers, with a vision to encourage alternatives to traditional crops and livestock.

Some possible alternative crops are sweet lupines, evening primrose and sweet potatoes. Innovation Agriculture will also be studying non-traditional livestock, for example, deer and

rabbits.

Buchanan said that Innovation Agriculture will complete some of the successful work conducted by the ad hoc Transition Crop Team (TCT), established in 1986.

"For some years now, the ministry's Transition Crop Team has been addressing the challenges to Ontario agriculture, particularly in the production and marketing of non-traditional crops, and has found opportunities in marketing and group business planning," Buchanan said.

Innovation Agriculture will continue the work of the TCT and "will capitalize on initiatives created by the industry for the continuing benefit of rural communities," he said.

The new unit will also "rein-

force the crucial importance of business planning and marketing in the search for new opportunities," he said.

The mandate of Innovation Agriculture is to:

- establish a permanent proactive commitment to continued diversification, innovation and entrepreneurship.

- provide assistance in the development of marketing strategies and techniques.

- encourage and sustain entrepreneurial initiatives.

- locate and consult specialists who can provide services for alternative livestock and crop production.

The Innovation Agriculture unit will have six full-time staff, including a group-business planning specialist, a field marketing

specialist, a market exploration agrology specialist and a specialist and a production secretary.

Chicken feed

A Winnipeg egg-processing firm has hatched a profitable plan to recycle millions of waste egg shells - it grinds them into feed for chickens.

Export Packers Company Ltd. uses 1.3 million eggs a day in the extraction of enzymes and manufacture of dehydrated egg powders. That leaves them with a soggy heap of waste shells that used to be sent to the local garbage dump.

Now the company has devised a process to turn the waste shells into a poultry feed supplement, called Egg Shell Meal, a rich source of calcium and protein for chickens.

With an expanded egg-processing plant and new equipment, all the former waste shells are now processed into the feed supplement.

Grant proposals

Grant proposals for on-farm demonstrations and conservation education projects under the Land Stewardship II program are being sought by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF). The ministry is seeking proposals from both local and provincial farm organizations as well as conservation authorities.

Grants for on-farm demonstration and evaluation projects are available to local farm organizations working in co-operation with agribusiness, colleges and universities. Projects can include: tillage systems, nutrient and pest management practices, conservation structures, and manure and waste management systems.

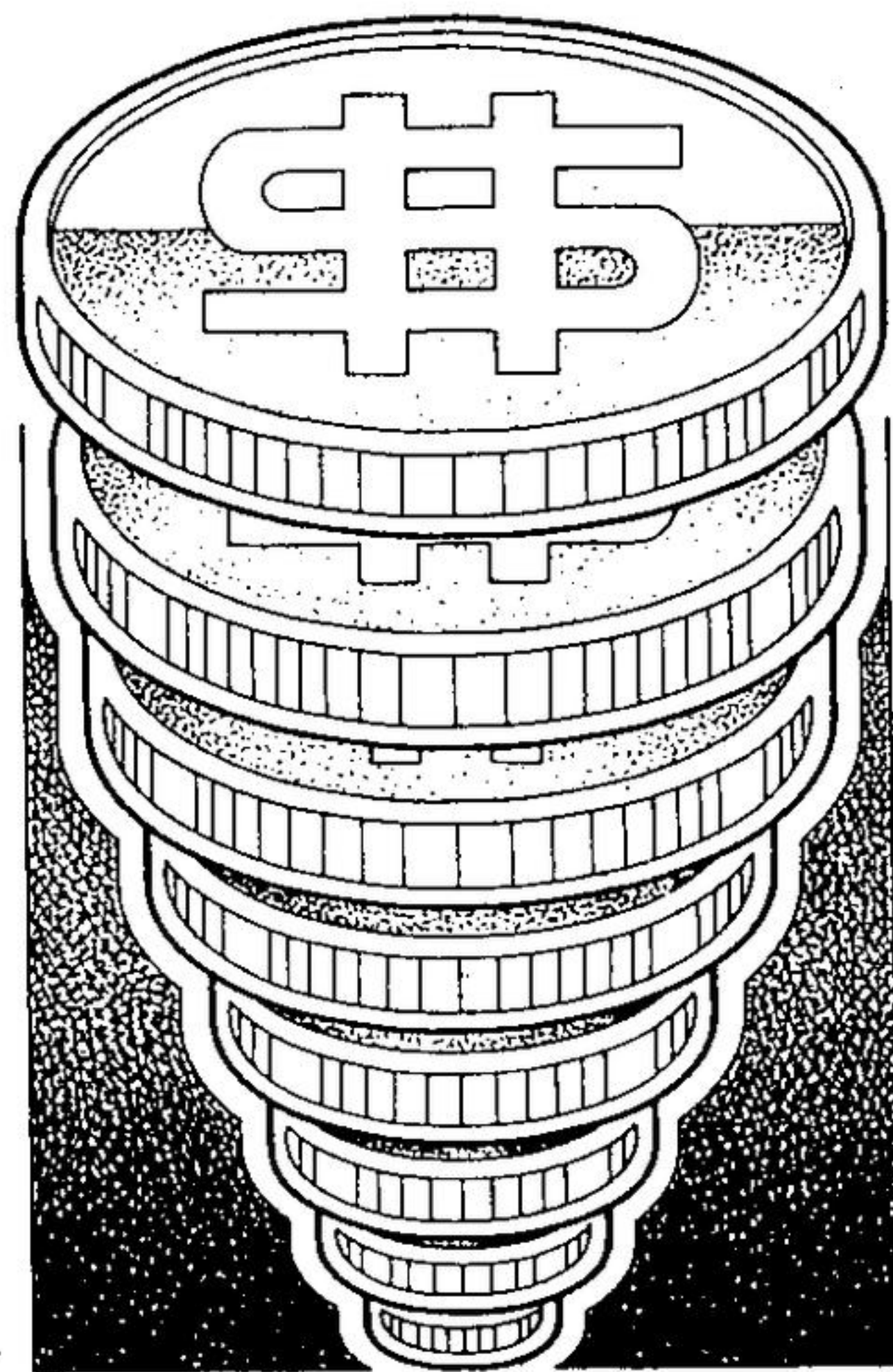
OMAF will share half the costs for up to \$10,000 per project site per year. The projects will be carefully monitored and resulting data will be made available to agricultural specialists and farmers in the province.

Grants for conservation awareness, promotion and education projects are available to local farm organizations for one-time projects, and to provincial farm organizations and conservation authorities for longer-term programs. Local projects may receive grants of up to \$5,000. Longer-term regional or provincial programs may be cost-shared up to 50 per cent to a maximum of \$40,000.

Organizations wishing further details about the grants are invited to contact the ministry's resources management branch in Guelph at (519) 767-3561.

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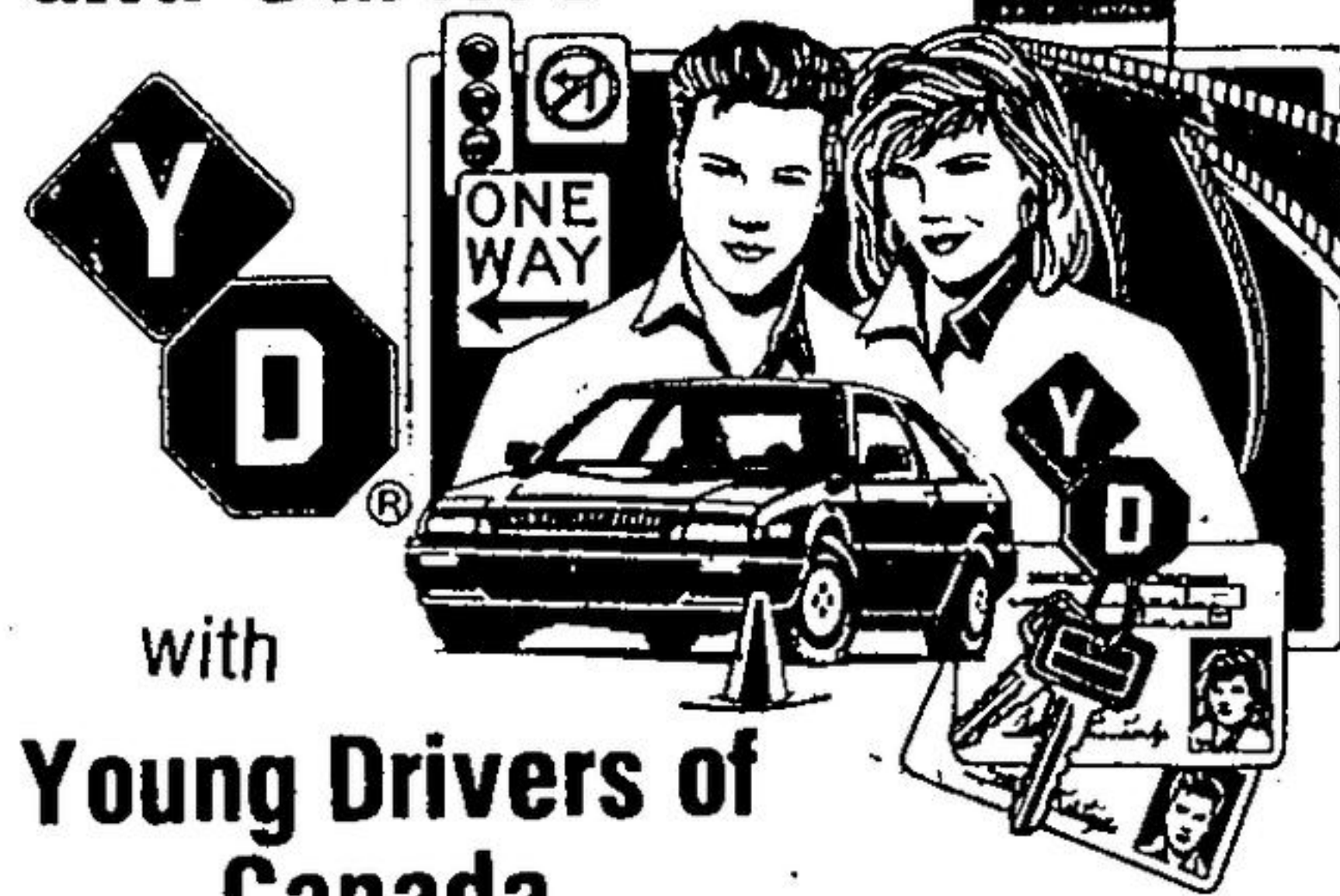
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