

MICHIGAN FARM NEWS

MICHIGAN'S ONLY STATEWIDE FARM NEWSPAPER

MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU



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Weather takes its toll on Michigan wheat crop

USDA releases estimated PFC payment rates

USDA has announced the estimated payment rates for wheat and feed grains under the new seven-year Production Flexibility Contracts (PFC) authorized under the 1996 farm bill, according to MFB Commodity Specialist Bob Boehm.

"The payment rates developed by USDA assumes 100 percent participation of 100 percent of eligible acres into PFCs for the full seven years," Boehm explained. "PFC payments could rise if producers enroll less than 100 percent, however."

For 1996 crops, producers will receive an estimated payment rate of 87 cents per bushel for wheat, 24 cents for corn, 31 cents for sorghum, 32 cents for barley and 3 cents for oats. Boehm said the new payment rates also include money now owed to USDA from producers who were overpaid on 1995 crops, which now total nearly \$1.72 billion due to higher market prices.

"Repayments for wheat, barley and oats will be redistributed in fiscal year 1996, while repayments for corn and sorghum will be redistributed in 1997," Boehm said. "Producers who have not yet repaid 1995 crop subsidies will have that amount deducted from their final fiscal 1996 payment under the new seven-year PFCs."

Producers will have a one-time opportunity to sign up for the PFCs from May 20 through July 12. Once the contract is approved, producers will receive 50 percent of the estimated 1996 payment within 30 days of contract approval. The final 1996 payment will then be made no later than Sept. 30.

"In future years, the 50 percent advance payment will be made on Dec. 15 or Jan. 15, at the option of the producer or the landowner participating in the program," Boehm advised. "Final payments for each year will continue to be made by Sept. 30."

Estimated PFC Payments

| Commodity | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Wheat | 87 | 61 | 65 | 63 | 57 | 46 | 45 |
| Corn | 24 | 46 | 36 | 35 | 32 | 26 | 25 |
| Sorghum | 31 | 50 | 42 | 40 | 37 | 30 | 29 |
| Barley | 32 | 25 | 26 | 24 | 22 | 18 | 17 |
| Oats | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 |

(Source: Knight Ridder Financial News)



Michigan's severe winter has ravaged the state's winter wheat crop. Preparing for the onslaught of wheat damage claims, the state's Farm Service Agency (FSA) recently held a training session in northeast Kent County. All state FSA field examiners were brought up to speed on how to evaluate wheat stands and settle claims.

Clinton administration announces steps to halt drop in beef prices

The Clinton administration recently announced several moves designed to help cattle producers, including an immediate \$50 million beef buy for the National School Lunch Program and expanded Conservation Reserve Program land haying and grazing.

Following a meeting between Clinton, a bipartisan group of lawmakers and Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, Glickman announced a five-point plan to address the problems facing the cattle industry. According to the White House, these steps "are designed to help relieve these pressures and assist in ensuring a stable, affordable supply of beef for American consumers."

The plan includes:

- Permit the nation's livestock producers to graze cattle, and, effective July 1, cut hay on land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), except the most environmentally sensitive land, through Sept. 30. Farmers who take advantage of this new option will have to forego 5 percent of their annual CRP rental payment for each month they use the land for grazing.
- Use all the tools at the Secretary's disposal, including existing short- and medium-term export credit guarantees, to promote the export of American beef. Work with the United States Trade Representative to press for resolution of the complaint that the U.S. has filed with the World Trade Organization against the European Union's ban on U.S. beef

produced with hormones.

- Start USDA's beef purchase program for the 1996-97 school year by beginning immediately to make purchases of up to \$50 million and consider further purchases later if market conditions warrant them.
- Survey the credit needs of livestock producers and report back to the president with any recommendations on the need for leniency within 30 days.
- Meet with livestock producers, industry representatives and others to monitor the impact of the announcement.

Glickman said he did not anticipate the beef buy to have a "major" impact on the market, but that the move would help keep the markets from falling further. He said he hoped some of the proposals would help keep cattle herds from facing large-scale liquidation.

"Allowing haying and grazing on CRP acres is necessary to alleviate the high feed costs that have caused substantial economic hardships for many producers," Sen. Chuck Grisly (R-Iowa) said. "And a large beef purchase by the U.S. government, \$50 million and more if needed, should help turn the tide in sagging markets."

While the National Cattlemen's Beef Association had been urging USDA to make the extra beef purchases for several weeks, many critics are calling the moves "token efforts in an election year designed to look good to key voting groups."

COVER STORY

The status of the Michigan wheat crop is probably as poor as it has been in the last 15 to 20 years, due to adverse weather conditions such as a lack of snow, extreme cold temperatures and excessive moisture," said MSU Extension Agricultural Agent Steve Poindexter as he summed up the state's dismal-looking wheat crop.

He predicts that a third to as much as a half of the wheat crop could be lost in some areas of the state, while other portions of the state appeared to have fared much better. "In the Saginaw Valley area and in the heart of the Thumb, we're seeing some real severe problems, probably more than other areas of the state."

Poindexter estimates this spring's below-normal temperatures have also taken a good 14 days worth of heat units out of the crop's normal growing season, putting a further dent in harvest yields and test weights. The quantity and quality of wheat seed available to producers this fall is also being called into question. "We're watching that situation very closely and growers may want to even consider lining up seed supplies earlier than normal," he suggested. "We may have a problem this year with certain varieties being in short supply."

Market Consequences

According to Michigan Agricultural Commodities Merchandiser Bruce Sutherland, the southeastern portion of the state's wheat crop didn't fare well either, with acreage loss estimates of 20 percent being predicted. "It would appear that earlier planted wheat fared better overall, but we do have some pretty serious winter-kill damage," Sutherland confirmed.

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News in Brief

Another CRP early-out

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced on April 15, 1996, that in order to implement the newly signed Farm Bill, certain CRP contracts would be eligible immediately for early termination. The new Notice CRP-250 supersedes early release requirements in Notice CRP-246. There is no specific signup period for early termination. It will be an ongoing permanent policy, according to Jim Porterfield, American Farm Bureau technical specialist.

Termination requests will be reviewed by NRCS for eligibility and will be effective 60 days after a written request to terminate is received by FSA.

Exceptions that are not eligible include acreage that has been enrolled for less than 5 years, has an erodibility index greater than 15, or was accepted under wetland criteria in sign-up period 8 and 9. Also not eligible are practices on which a useful life easement is filed, field windbreaks, grass waterways, shallow water areas for wildlife, vegetative filter strips, bottomland timber on wetlands, shelterbelts, or land located within 100 feet of a perennial stream or permanent water body. All totaled, USDA estimates 12.4 million acres would be ineligible, including 68 percent of the Corn Belt CRP acres.

It should be remembered, however, that the 10-year contracts expire for 14 million acres in September of 1996 and many of these acres came into the CRP under the corn bonus program. USDA has indicated holders of contracts that expire in September will be offered one-year extensions at that time.

Checkoff lawsuit

California-based Joseph Gallo Farms filed a lawsuit in federal court challenging a dairy checkoff that requires California dairy farmers to pay 15 cents per hundredweight on the milk they produce.

Gallo said although the dairy promotion dollars earned by the checkoff have helped boost fluid milk consumption, it is of virtually no help to cheese producers.

Gallo said for an average herd of 550 dairy cows producing an average of 20,000 pounds of milk per year, that farmer would have to pay \$110,000 annually in checkoff fees. He is encouraged by a recent successful challenge by almond growers to a similar checkoff on their crops.

Growers urged to recycle pesticide containers

Farmers should recycle pesticide containers, not burn them or send them to a landfill," said Jim Byrum, President of the Michigan Agri-Business Association.

"More than 100 pesticide retailers across the state, in cooperation with manufacturers and distributors, will collect clean, empty pesticide containers from their farmer customers this season and send them to a central point for grinding, then on to be used in the manufacture of new plastic materials," added Byrum.

"Farmers should rinse the containers, and then take them back to their retailer," he added. The plastic in these containers can be used for many different purposes, and it is much better to recycle the material than burn it or turn it over to a trash hauler for a landfill.

Recycling is an excellent way for farmers to help maintain environment quality and properly dispose of pesticide containers. For more information on the pesticide container recycling program, and to locate the participating retailer nearest you, call the Michigan Agri-Business Association at 517/336-0223.

Anti-ethanol bill

Reps. Randy Tate (R-Wash.) and Sam Gibbons (D-Fla.) have introduced legislation to repeal the federal ethanol tax credit. Tate said by ending the tax credit, "one of the most egregious examples of corporate welfare" would cease to exist.

Tate's bill has been called "Drive Away From Ethanol Welfare Act of 1996" and has some support in the House. Tate's effort is similar to a failed attempt by Rep. Bill Archer (R-Texas) last year. He is calling his bill a safety measure that will further stuff the coffers of the Highway Trust Fund with monies otherwise set aside for the tax credit.

ADM to cut ethanol production further

Archer Daniels Midland Co., which announced a cutback in ethanol production at the beginning of April due to \$4 corn, says it plans to reduce output further in response to \$5 corn.

This is a much bigger cutback than the one announced earlier at ADM's Peoria, Ill., plant. The company says the current cutback has reduced its nationwide corn consumption by about 29 million bushels per month.

That compares with a cutback of only eight million per month in the earlier announcement concerning the Peoria plant.

Clinton sweet on saving Everglades

President Clinton received a sour reception from the sugar industry during a campaign swing through Florida recently, as his support for a proposed penny-a-pound tax on Florida sugar drew criticism. An environmental group is working on placing the tax initiative on the November ballot to help pay for the restoration.

Entering the hot political fray concerning the restoration of Florida's Everglades, Clinton met with environmental activists in a strategy session. The closed-door meeting included leaders of the Save Our Everglades group.

The sugar industry says the tax will place thousands out of work. Over 1,000 sugar workers, chartered to the Coral Gables hotel, gathered outside the meeting, waved signs and chanted, "Save Our Jobs!" They had company. About 100 environmentalists demonstrated in favor of the proposed tax, wearing t-shirts with the message, "Make The Polluters Pay."

The restoration of the Everglades is shaping up as a hot political issue in the Sunshine State this year. Apparent Republican presidential nominee Sen. Bob Dole toured the Everglades during an earlier campaign swing.

Pork prices pick up

The Agriculture Department said the number of U.S. sows farrowing will be lower this year, leading to a 3 percent decline in domestic pork production. Those lower numbers will likely equate to slightly higher market prices for producers — in the upper \$40s per 100 pounds in the late spring, to near \$50 per cwt. this summer and back to the mid-\$40s this fall.

For consumers, USDA projects the composite retail price to average near \$2.50 per pound compared to \$1.92 per pound last year and \$2.01 in 1994. Although the average will likely trend lower during the latter part of the year, USDA said those prices will still be an average of 5 percent above 1995.

The U.S. is projected to remain a net pork exporter — last year was the first time in history the U.S. exported more pork than it imported. The department said exports near last year's 771 million pounds will likely occur this year. Most of the exported pork — 47 percent — goes to Japan, followed by Russia, Mexico and Hong Kong.

USDA invites northeast dairy compact comments

Does a compelling public interest exist to warrant implementation of the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact? USDA Secretary Dan Glickman is searching for an answer.

The USDA is asking interested parties to submit written comments on the compact, which would establish a commission to regulate the marketing of milk among states in the New England region. The commission would also have authority to examine current economic forces affecting production, consumption, farm prices and financial conditions of dairy farmers.

"Before making a determination, I want to be certain that all interested parties have had an opportunity to provide comments on the existence of a compelling public interest in the region," Glickman said.

Comments will be accepted through June 3. Submit two copies of your comments to USDA, Room 2971, South Building, PO Box 96456, Washington, DC 20090-6456.

High court denies review of alar lawsuit

The Supreme Court has denied review of a lawsuit brought by Washington state apple growers seeking to recover damages resulting from a 1989 *60 Minutes* report about the alleged health risks of apples treated with daminozide — commonly referred to as Alar.

Apple growers said their losses due to the Alar scare totaled \$75 million and many were forced out of business due to a lack of buyers resulting from numerous boycotts. The growers filed suit in 1990 and a U.S. District Court ruled in 1993 that the growers failed to present evidence showing that the CBS report was false.

The growers then petitioned the Supreme Court for review after the federal Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit affirmed the district court's judgment in October 1995.

EPA changing guidelines

For years, the Environmental Protection Agency has relied on animal testing to determine cancer risks of certain chemicals and pollutants. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the EPA will de-emphasize animal testing and utilize recent scientific advances to determine the risks of chemicals and pollutants.

Pollutants were automatically judged by the EPA to be cancer-causing if they were shown to cause cancer in laboratory animals. Under the new procedure, the EPA will have greater flexibility when taking into account epidemiological data. The new guidelines will expand the instances in which non-animal data is used to determine the cancer risk in a certain substance.

The new procedure will apply to substances already being regulated by the agency and to new substances. The EPA also has established a process for listing a priority on which chemicals to re-review.

Congress working to free up FmHA loans

Congress is working to remedy a loan bottleneck that was unintentionally written into the new Farm Bill, according to FarmDayta.

Legislation is being drafted to free up loans for farmers blocked by a new farm bill provision that denies FmHA loans to farmers who had previous FmHA loans written off or written down.

The provision took effect immediately with the April 4 signing of the farm bill, shutting off an estimated 1,000 to 1,200 farmers nationwide who need FmHA loans for spring planting.

Lawmakers say they never intended to block farmers who had already submitted applications before the farm bill took effect and are paying back their loans on time.

The chairmen of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees are pushing through corrective legislation and intend to attach it to a stop-gap spending bill so that approval will come quickly, says Reuters News Service.

ADM lawsuit dismissed

The Archer Daniels Midland Co. has agreed to settle a civil price-fixing lawsuit that accused the agricultural products giant of manipulating the \$600 million-per-year-market for the livestock feed supplement lysine. ADM reportedly controls about 40 percent of the domestic lysine market.

ADM said it was not admitting any wrongdoing by agreeing to the settlement, reported to be around \$25 million. The company will still face criminal price-fixing charges and other federal lawsuits over alleged price-fixing in markets for high-fructose corn syrup, citric acid and two other products.

Peaches, apples suffer from cold spell

Nearly 80 percent of South Carolina's peach crop and over half of its apple crop did not survive the recent cold weather streak through the South. According to Dale Linville, agriculture meteorologist for the Clemson University Extension service, the state's peach crop suffered nearly \$28 million in damages because of the cold weather. Chip Satcher, a peach grower in Johnston, S.C., says, "90-95 percent of trees haven't got a single peach on them."

Urban populations growing, rural dwindling

A report to be released by the United Nations will say that by the turn of the century, for the first time, more persons will be living in urban areas and cities than in rural areas.

The report was produced to warn of the impacts and environmental dangers in increasing urbanization. The paper was produced by the U.N. Development and Environment programs, the World Bank and the World Resources Institute.

The report said in 1975, only a third of all persons lived in cities, but by the year 2005, more than two-thirds of the world's population will live in towns and cities, rather than in the countryside.

Higher corn prices don't equal higher food prices

Consumers need not worry about food price inflation resulting from the recent surge in corn prices, according to the Illinois Corn Marketing Board (ICMB).

The highest corn prices in recent memory have triggered consumer concern over the impact the prices will have at the grocery store. Joe Uhl, an agricultural economist at Purdue University, says the high corn prices will not translate into higher costs to the consumer.

"The farm value of a commodity going into a finished product at the retail level is very small, especially in the grain area," he said. Floyd Schultz, District Director with ICMB, worries that food companies will use the higher "farm-level" prices as an excuse to boost prices. In years of low commodity prices, food companies have not historically passed along any cost savings to consumers, according to Schultz. Increases in commodity prices have been used as an excuse to raise the price of items like breakfast cereals.

U.S. challenging Canadian tariffs

Canadian tariffs on dairy products, poultry and eggs — some reaching as high as 351 percent — are being challenged by the U.S. government, which claims the tariffs violate a 1988 commitment that was supposed to phase out all tariffs within 10 years.

Canadian officials maintain the tariffs, set last year, are necessary to protect the country's agricultural community. The United States says the tariffs are a direct violation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Canadian officials dispute this claim, stating that Canada and the United States agreed to limited rather than unlimited market access for dairy, poultry and egg products.

Canada accuses the U.S. of "trying to achieve through dispute settlement what it couldn't get through negotiations" during NAFTA talks.

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Capitol Corner

For more information on legislative topics in the Michigan Farm News, call 800-292-2680.

STATE ISSUE

Amendments to Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act, P.A. 116 of 1974

HB. 4325, sponsored by Rep. Michelle McManus (R-Lake Leelanau), has been approved by the Senate Agricultural Committee and sent to the Senate floor for further debate. The following is a summary of substantive House amendments to H.B. 4325:

- The definition of agriculture was clarified and updated to reflect the diversity of Michigan's agriculture and expanded to include berries, herbs, flowers, seeds, grasses, nursery stock and other agricultural products.
- "Permitted use" is defined and clarified to include storage, retail marketing and processing of products that are grown and produced on the farm.
- The definition of "permitted uses" is expanded to include storage, retail marketing and processing of agricultural products if more than 50 percent of the stored, processed or merchandised products are produced by the farm operation during at least three of the last five immediately preceding years.
- The maximum term of agreement is set at 90 years; current law provides no maximum.
- Allows for housing to be built for a farmer or farm employees.
- "Permitted uses" are allowed if they do not affect the productivity of the land.
- The State Land Use Agency (DNR) is required to notify owners seven years before the expiration and of the options for claiming credits in the remaining seven years.
- The bill describes the procedure for determining life-lease or life-estate claim credits.
- Requests for termination, due to death of one of the individuals essential to the operation, may take place within three years of the death of the individual.
- When the owner of the land becomes totally or permanently disabled or dies, the surviving owner/spouse may request a portion of the land that contained structures existing prior to the agreement be removed from the program. This includes an individual who may inherit property through rights of survivorship.
- An agreement may be divided or split as long as the division or split follows the same criteria as for enrolling the land (i.e., 40 acres or more of which 50 percent or more is tillable).
- "Individual essential to the operation" is defined as a co-owner, partner, shareholder or family member who, to a material extent, cultivates, operates or manages the farmland if that individual does one or more of the following:
 - has financial interest equal to or greater than one-half of the cost of the crops, livestock or products and is actively involved with the production.
 - works 1,040 hours or more annually on the farm.
- A fee may be charged for splits or transfers.
- New language provides that an agreement may be extended for seven years. Under current law, ten years is a minimum renewal period.
- Clarifies that buildings that existed prior to the agreement, and up to two acres of land, may be released from the program.
- Provides for the removal of land from the agreement for a building site of up to two acres for individuals essential to the operation.
- Provides for a window of opportunity to reduce the length of the agreement to seven years remaining, provided the land has been in for an initial 10-year period.
- Provides for repayment, at 6 percent, of credits calculated for termination for the last seven years. (May be simple or compound interest, depending on the reason for termination.)
- The DNR is required to provide a 30-day notice prior to placing a lien on the property at the maturing of the agreement.
- Only farmland development rights may be purchased from the funds collected. Current law provides that unique or critical lands could be preserved. This definition would be limited only to farmland.
- The method in determining the repayment of the credits in the event of death or disability is clarified.

- Major language is added to the criteria for termination and states that upon request from the landowner, the local governing body (usually the township), and the DNR shall terminate the agreement if one or both of the following conditions are present:
 - The local governing body determines one or more of the following:
 - The quality of the farmland cannot be made economically viable
 - Surrounding conditions create physical obstacles or prohibits essential practices
 - Significant natural physical changes in the farmland have occurred that are generally irreversible and permanently limit the productivity of the farmland
 - A court order restricts use of the farmland
 - The local governing body determines the termination is in the public's interest and one or more of the following conditions are met:
 - The farmland is to be owned, operated and maintained by a public body for public use
 - The farmland had been zoned for the immediately preceding three years for commercial or industrial use
 - The farmland is to be owned, operated or maintained by a tax exempt organization, and the project will benefit the local community. Release for public interest shall consider the following:
 - The long-term effect of the termination on remaining farms
 - Other reasonable and prudent site alternatives
 - Infrastructure changes and costs to local government as a result of developing the farmland.

The landowner may appeal to the DNR if the request to terminate the agreement is denied by the local governing body. The DNR will review applications for termination to verify the criteria to terminate was met. The bill defines "economic viability" and the method for determining economic viability.

- The process and criteria for the purchase of farmland development rights agreement is detailed in the bill. This is a major new section containing detailed language regarding the purchase of development rights.

Several very important Senate amendments were added, including:

- A window until April 1, 1997, to allow farmers to terminate their agreement if they entered and signed an agreement before April 15, 1994. Any credits received in the last seven years are calculated and no interest is added. *Farm Bureau opposes this section.*
- "Farm manager" is added to the list of individuals essential to the operation.
- Removes the cap of \$5,000 on the purchase of development rights, which was a House amendment.
- Requires that when the lien is released or paid up, the contract is also released at the same time.
- Removes the House provision in the bill that provided for reimbursement to local governments when land was placed in development rights agreements, thus providing revenue for the difference in value between farmland and developmental land.
- Pulp wood was added to the type of production that would qualify for P.A. 116 land.
- Clarification dealing with special assessments that land under contract to P.A. 116 is exempt from special assessments for sanitary sewers, water, lights or nonfarm drainage unless the improvements are used on the land.

Several other amendments were offered but were not approved.

FB Position: Michigan Farm Bureau supports H.B. 4325 but continues to oppose the section that provides for an early out.

FB Contact: Ron Nelson, ext. 2043.

Special Notes: Senate floor amendments are expected. The House is also required to approve the Senate amendments or the bill will be assigned to a Joint Conference Committee of the House and Senate. ■

NATIONAL ISSUE

Health care insurance deduction

The 25 percent tax deduction for health insurance premiums paid by self-employed persons expired Dec. 31, 1993. Congress later passed, and President Clinton signed, a bill to reinstate the 25 percent tax deduction for 1994 and put in place a permanent 30 percent deduction for 1995 and future years.

In late November 1995, Congress passed a budget reconciliation bill that would balance the budget in seven years. The bill included a provision increasing the 30 percent tax deduction for health insurance premiums to 35 percent in 1998-99, 40 percent in 2000-2001 and 50 percent beginning in 2002. President Clinton vetoed the bill.

On March 28, 1996, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 3103, which increases the 30 percent health insurance premium deduction to 50 percent by 2003. On April 23, 1996, the U.S. Senate passed S. 1028, which would increase the deduction 5 percent each year through 2006. The annual increases would raise the deduction from the current 30 percent to 80 percent in 2006. It is expected the legislation will now go to a Conference Committee to reconcile differences between the two bills.

FB Position: Strongly supports increasing the health insurance premium deduction to 100 percent.

FB Contact: Al Almy, ext. 2040. ■

NATIONAL ISSUE

Fireblight disease of apple trees

Fireblight, a bacterial disease of apples, has caused severe production problems in Michigan and other apple-producing states. The only known control for fireblight is Streptomycin; however, resistance to Streptomycin is becoming common, leaving producers with no effective alternative to control fireblight disease.

A new research project to control and solve the fireblight problem has been proposed cooperatively by the Michigan State University Agricultural Experiment Station and the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station at Cornell University. The proposed research effort calls for the following:

- Refinement of fireblight detection techniques, including molecular methods for detecting the pathogen and computer models for identifying environmental conditions favorable for infection.
- Possible biological controls with microorganisms and bacteria-destroying viruses and their integrations with cultural methods of control.
- The antibiotic-resistance phenomenon will be further researched with emphasis on developing antiresistance strategies; field populations will be

monitored for copper resistance.

- The development of fireblight-resistant cultivars and rootstocks, using conventional breeding methods, will be an important but long-term objective.
- Genetic engineering of fireblight-resistant plants using techniques developed at Cornell University will be expanded and, when available, performance of resistant plants will be evaluated outside New York State.
- Chemical screening, and integrating chemical with biological and cultural control methods will be undertaken to find short-term control procedures. Integrated pest management will be the major consideration in this area.

A financial grant of \$1.5 million annually for a period of 5 years is being requested from Congress. The request is currently pending in the U.S. House Agricultural Appropriations Subcommittee.

FB Position: Farm Bureau and the Michigan Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Association (MACMA) are supporting the fireblight research proposal.

FB Contact: Al Almy, Ext. 2040. ■

Sugar/peanut programs again under fire

Two leading critics of the sugar and peanut support programs say they may ask Congress again this year to pare back or kill the programs, Reuters reports.

Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) points out that the sugar and peanut programs — as well as dairy — just underwent modest reform in the new seven-year farm bill and could use some more changes.

He says the peanut support price of \$610 per ton is too high and that acreage controls are indefensible. He argues that jobs in the food industry are in jeopardy due to high peanut prices.

If he does try to reform the peanut program, the most likely method would be through an amendment to the yearly appropriations measure for USDA.

As for the sugar program, Rep. Dan Miller (R-Fla.) says he and his anti-sugar allies may try to push through some modifications, such as boosting sugar imports or putting limits on U.S. sugar prices.

"I don't think we'd do a total elimination. There are some intermediate steps we could take," he told a Washington seminar sponsored by the conservative Heritage Foundation. ■

MSU pesticide recordkeeping books revised

The Annual Record Books (part of the MSU paper recordkeeping system introduced in 1992) were revised in 1995. These revisions affect only the pesticide recordkeeping and make these record books a more complete guide for the information that is required and/or recommended for crop producers to keep. Changes include the following:

- **An index to fields** — provides a chart (at the front of either book) to list the Field IDs for each field included in the Annual Record Book so records for an individual field can be more easily found by the number used in each corner of the book's pages
- A brief discussion of "**Laws Related to Pesticide Recordkeeping**"
- **Required Pesticide Information** — a chart where the pesticide name can be written along with its EPA Registration Number, the Active Ingredients, and its REI (Restricted Entry Interval)
- **Pesticide Applicator Information** — a chart where the name of all applicators can be listed along with their certification number
- **Calibration of Application Equipment** — brief discussion about calibration of equipment and a place to write down the month and year of the last calibration for 1 to 1 "fertilizer spreaders," "pesticide applicators," and "manure spreaders"

- The "**Total Amount Applied**" was added to the Pesticide Applications Chart listed for each individual field.

These changes make the Annual Record Books a more complete pesticide application recordkeeping tool for producers, i.e., if all the information is recorded in the books, the producer will be meeting the required pesticide recordkeeping and/or the pesticide recordkeeping recommended by the Right-to-Farm GAAMP. One exception to this is the separate posting of re-entry times for fields, as required by the Worker Protection Standard.

Two sizes of Annual Record Books are available. The pocket-sized book (Extension Bulletin E-2341) measures 3.5 x 5.5 inches (easily fits in a shirt pocket) and can be used to record information for up to 20 individual fields. The full-sized book (Extension Bulletin E-2342) measures 5.5 x 8.5 inches (can be carried in the cab of a pickup truck, tractor, etc.) and can be used to record information for up to 40 individual fields. The new cost of E-2341 and E-2342 is \$2.50 each.

Annual Record Books can be obtained from your county MSU Cooperative Extension Service office or from the MSUE Bulletin Office, 10B Agriculture Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1039. Please make check payable to Michigan State University. ■

Herbicide decisions on replanted wheat fields

The past winter's severe weather conditions had serious consequences on much of the state's wheat crop, especially in fields planted in late October. Growers faced with the decision of whether to keep the wheat crop or replace it with another crop may find the following information, from MSU's Dr. Jim Kells, valuable in considering alternatives.

Crop Selection

From a nitrogen management standpoint, the crop of choice for planting into winter-killed wheat would be corn, says Kells.

Tillage Considerations

Alternative crop can be planted with or without tillage. Kells says what's important is that remaining wheat be killed to avoid competition with other crops. Secondary tillage can effectively kill the over-wintered wheat. In general, the smaller the wheat, the easier it will be to kill, advises Kells.

"A good tillage implement would be a disk, followed a few days later with either a disk or a field cultivator to kill the wheat that may have survived the initial tillage," Kells said. "If areas of the field have larger healthy tillered wheat, an application of Roundup Ultra three or more days before tillage will assure adequate wheat kill."

In situations where no-till will be used, Kells said wheat kill with a herbicide, preferably Roundup Ultra, is absolutely essential. "Be sure that the surviving wheat has recovered to the extent that it is actively growing with green leaves to intercept the spray," he advised.

The following table can be used as a guideline for Roundup Ultra to kill over-wintered wheat. ■

Roundup Ultra Rate^(a)

| Wheat Height ^(a) | Applied Alone | Tank-Mixed |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| up to 6" | 1 pt./A | 1-1/2 pt./A |
| 6" to 12" | 1-1/2 pt./A | 2 pt./A |

(a) Wheat must be green and actively growing (daytime temperature equal to or greater than 50 F) for maximum effectiveness.

(b) Ammonium Sulfate (AMS) at 17 lbs/100 gallon of spray often improves control and is recommended, especially when tank-mixing with other herbicides.

Weather takes its toll on Michigan wheat crop

Continued from front page

COVER STORY

Similar winter-kill patterns exist in other Midwest states of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, says Sutherland. To add insult to injury, drought conditions in Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas, combined with record-low inventory levels, pushed the new crop wheat price on the Chicago Board of Trade to historical highs of over \$6.20 per bushel, meaning producers may miss out on the chance of capturing high prices, and making the cost of getting out of forward contracts a costly proposition.

"Quite a number of producers started to lock in contracts in the \$3.50 to \$4 range — which is still a heck of a price," Sutherland explained. "The biggest number of calls we're getting right now are, 'I've got a \$4 contract on wheat, but I'm not sure I've got the wheat. What's it going to cost me to get out of that contract?'"

Typically, the cost will be the difference between the contract price and the current new crop price, plus 5 to 15 cents per bushel, says Sutherland. Despite the cost of cancelling a contract, Sutherland urges producers to avoid rolling a contract. "I'd rather do a cancellation — if you've got a problem, take care of it right now, don't prolong it," he said.

That means a producer shouldn't waste too much time deciding what to do with a questionable field of wheat, especially if the producer had forward-contracted the crop. "Make a decision as soon as you can because, if you prolong it, it'll just get worse," Sutherland predicted. "Not only are farms in Michigan dealing with a poor wheat crop, you've got guys elsewhere that are experiencing a poor crop as well. So the sooner you react to the situation, the better off you're going to be."

Stand Evaluation

Minimum acceptable plant populations depend on several factors, including the current price on wheat and the current price on an alternative crop. Under ideal conditions, the best yields will be achieved with stand counts of 1.9 million plants per acre, which equates to 44 plants per square foot or 26 plants per foot of a 7-inch row.

"If you want to use base figures, 14 plants per foot in a 7-inch row, or 24 plants per square foot can still provide anywhere from 50 to 80 percent of

a normal yield," Poindexter explained. "That's a big range, so then the question becomes, how healthy are the plants? If they're less than a couple of inches and they're really struggling, then you're closer to the 50 percent level. If they're vigorous plants that are growing well above 4 inches, then you can expect closer to 80 percent."

For fields that are considered salvageable, Poindexter says producers will need to be on their toes in combatting weed infestation in "thin stands." "Weed control is critical to get the crop into July to harvest a high-quality crop," he said. "Normally we apply chemicals once to the wheat to control weeds. If the stands are thin, there may be a need for a second application of perhaps an alternative herbicide."

From a disease standpoint, Poindexter says that while thin stands will have less risk of powdery mildew, the delayed spring growth and potentially delayed harvest could open the door for more leaf rust later on in the season.

For wheat stands considered lost, Poindexter suggests an application of Roundup be made as soon as the decision has been made to abandon the crop, to help preserve moisture for the next crop, which he suggests be corn. "If the wheat crop had been top-dressed with nitrogen, it makes good sense to replace the wheat crop with corn, since most of your nitrogen will still be there for the corn to utilize," Poindexter recommended. Producers who opt to no-till corn on abandoned wheat acres should be alert for army worm problems, which are quite common in corn following a rye cover crop rotation.

While soybeans and dry beans could also be an option, especially later in the planting season, Poindexter hesitates recommending either of those crops as a first option due to potentially increased white mold pressures.

Last but not least, Poindexter discourages any consideration of spring-planted wheat since yields will be, at best, only 60 percent of winter wheat, and marketing would be a problem.



MSU Extension agent Steve Poindexter show the winter kill damage to wheat that's left its mark on many wheat stands across the state.

For more information on deciding what to do with marginally growing wheat, contact your MSU Extension office or Steve Poindexter at (517) 799-2233. ■

Factors to consider for destroying wheat fields

1. Determine if plant population is adequate.
2. Evenness of stand — evenly thin or sporadic thin spots?
3. Fall growth on wheat — early-planted wheat yields better than later-planted wheat.
4. Ability to control weeds in thin stand till harvest?
5. Value of wheat crop per bushel and per acre?
6. Value of alternative crop to be planted, if wheat is destroyed?
7. Inputs already applied to wheat, such as nitrogen.
8. Is the wheat already contracted?
9. Does the wheat have a legume seeding?
10. PROFIT POTENTIAL?



Serving Michigan farm families is our only business

Since its beginning in 1971, Michigan Farm Radio Network's only objective has been to serve Michigan's farm families. This dedication to serve agriculture is shared by 26 local radio stations in Michigan. Through these stations, Michigan Farm Radio Network provides the latest in market analysis, weather and news to Farm Bureau members daily on the following stations:

| Station | City | Frequency | Morning Report | Noon Report |
|---------|---------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| WABJ | Adrian | 1490 | 5:45 am | 11:05-12:00 pm |
| WATZ | Alpena | 1450 | 5:30 am | 11:30 am |
| WTKA | Ann Arbor | 1050 | 6:05 am | 12:00-1:00 pm |
| WLEW | Bad Axe | 1340 | 6:30 am | 12:50 pm |
| WHFB | Benton Harbor | 1060 | | 12:15 pm |
| WKJF | Cadillac | 1370 | 5:45 am | 11:10 am |
| WKYO | Caro | 1360 | 6:15 am | 12:10-1:00 pm |
| WTVB | Coldwater | 1590 | 5:45 am | 12:00-1:00 pm |
| WDOW | Dowagiac | 1440 | 6:05 am | 12:15 pm |
| WGHN AM | Grand Haven | 1370 | 5:45 am | 12:15 pm |
| WGHN FM | Grand Haven | 92.1 | 5:45 am | 12:15 pm |
| WPLB | Greenville | 1380 | 6:15 am | 11:50 am |
| WBCH | Hastings | 1220 | 6:15 am | 12:30 pm |
| WCSR | Hillsdale | 1340 | 6:45 am | 12:45 pm |
| WHTC | Holland | 1450 | | 12:15 pm |
| WKZO | Kalamazoo | 590 | 5:00-6:00 am | 12:00-1:00 pm |
| WPLB FM | Lakeview | 106.3 | 6:15 am | 12:15 pm |
| WOAP | Owosso | 1080 | 7:15 am | 12:40 pm |
| WHAK | Rogers City | 960 | | 12:15 pm |
| WSJ | St. Johns | 1580 | 6:15 am | 12:05-1:05 pm |
| WMLM | St. Louis | 1520 | 6:05 am | 12:20 pm |
| WSGW | Saginaw | 790 | 5:55 am | 11:30-12:30 pm |
| WMIC | Sandusky | 660 | 6:15 am | 12:45 pm |
| WKJC FM | Tawas City | 104.7 | | 12:40 pm |
| WLKM | Three Rivers | 1510 | 5:45 am | 12:15 pm |
| WTCM | Traverse City | 580 | 5:45 am | 11:10 am |

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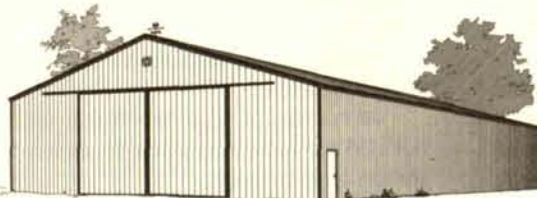
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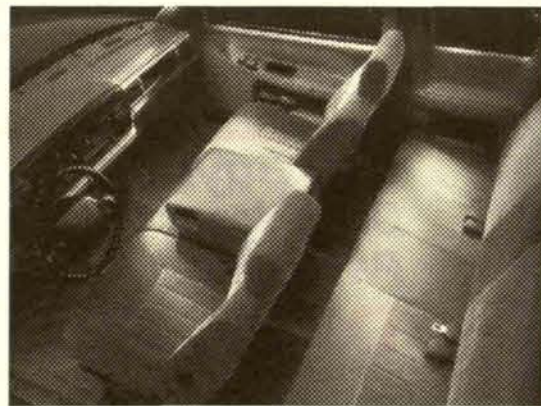


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Market Outlook

by Dr. Jim Hilker,
Department of
Agricultural Econom-
ics, Michigan State
University



CORN

Volatility continues to be the key word in the corn market. We will likely continue to see several days of sharp increases followed by sharp decreases. With the extremely tight stocks, this pattern could continue into August. The two main factors that the market will be trying to guess are rationing of demand and yields.

It is not clear whether or not the corn price has gone high enough to curb use, and we probably will not know for sure until after the fact. Sow and cow slaughter is up significantly from last year, but that will only help on the margin through this marketing year and will hurt demand for the 1996-97 marketing year.

Cattle slaughter weights have cut back to year-ago levels. The USDA has announced that some CRP land will be opened up for grazing, which will mean some more cattle will go to grass versus the feedlots. Ethanol plants are cutting back sharply, but not enough can be saved there to alleviate the whole problem.

Corn export shipments are running 16 percent over last year at this time. The forecast is that they will be up 4 percent. That means some sharp cuts in the fourth quarter. Corn export sales show some signs of slowing up.

If the weather cooperates, we will probably plant 1-2 million more acres of corn than the farmers projected in March. It will take that and close-to-trend yields to replenish stocks to more normal levels, unless corn prices continue to skyrocket and livestock is cut sharply. With the late spring and tight stocks, it will not take much of a weather scare to send prices up sharply, and it will not take a lot of nice weather to send them back down.

Consider pricing most remaining old crop as we rally to new highs and/or by the end of pollination. Consider pricing up to 20-30 percent of new crop in the near-term if you have not already done so. Prices may go higher, but you will want to protect yourself somewhat from the downside risk. Consider pricing more as we reach new highs. This next year should act more like a short crop year if yields are down much below trend. That is, we will likely see better returns to corn early in the year versus later.

Seasonal Commodity Price Trends

| | | |
|----------|---|---|
| Corn | ↔ | ↑ |
| Soybeans | ↔ | ↑ |
| Wheat | ↔ | ↑ |
| Hogs | ↔ | ↑ |
| Cattle | ↔ | ↑ |

Index: ↔ = stable prices; ↑ = higher prices; ↓ = lower prices; TP = topping; BT = bottoming; ? = unsure

WHEAT

At first glance, the wheat story looks much like the corn — tight stocks and weather concerns. However, there is one very big difference — the potential for a good U.S. wheat yield is not there! The hard red wheat crop in Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas will be very poor, at best. The soft red wheat crop in the lower Corn Belt looks poor. Good growing conditions from this point out will definitely help the wheat crop, but the time for a stocks-building crop has passed. Prices will be good for wheat harvested this year. The more important question is, how much will a producer have to sell?

On the demand side for this 1996-97 crop we may have some completion. Wheat acres in Europe are up and conditions to this point are okay. Wheat acres in Canada are up 4 million acres, for a whopping 16 percent increase. The increase in world acres may put a lid on prices this summer, but they will not mean low prices for this marketing year. However, this doesn't mean high wheat prices for several years; we have enough acres that a good yield could still rebuild stocks in the 1997-98 crop year.

Consider having some of your new crop priced at this point. If the weather cooperates from this point on, prices could drop some. Have a plan to price more as you learn more about your crop and on new rallies. Since we will not really know how bad the crop might be, consider holding off pricing it all until harvest. At that time, we will both know more and can determine if it may pay to store.

SOYBEANS

Soybeans are yet another story, except for extreme price volatility as we go through the growing season. We have good prices and low stocks despite having a decent crop last year. And we will continue to have tight stocks and good prices in the 1996-97 crop year even with trend yields. Does that mean prices cannot drop? No. Does it mean we will have opportunities to lock in good prices? Yes.

Over the next couple of years we will be able to rebuild stocks. But for this 1996-97 crop year, corn and wheat bid higher for the acres and not a lot of CRP acres will come into production of soybeans. On top of that, Canada cut back canola acres by 4 million (31 percent), which is where their increase in wheat acres came from.

Export shipments are running at a rate just below what it would need to meet USDA projections. And crushings are down, but all that means is that prices are high enough to ration supply IF we are sure of a good crop this fall. We know better than banking on that at this point.

Consider pricing most of your remaining old crop if we get near their previous highs. Be a market watcher to price more of your new crop. I assume you have some priced at these very good prices we are seeing now.

HOGS

Pork production was down around 3 percent in April. The March *Hogs and Pigs Report* suggested that it would be about the same as the previous year. Lighter weights account for half of the difference and fewer hogs available for market account for the other half. Put strong demand on top of this and we are seeing prices much higher than expected. Can it last? Yes. Will it last? Maybe. Can you lock in good prices now? Yes. Seriously consider locking in some of next year's production if you haven't already.

Sow slaughter was up 11 percent and 21 percent the first 2 weeks of April. This increase is due to high feed prices and good sow prices. And, while that may slow up with the last surge in hog prices, it will probably mean a slow-up in supply sometime next year. Exports are forecast to stay strong. If corn prices drop by fall and domestic demand stays good, so will returns in the hog sector. Another positive is that there's plenty of slaughter capacity, unlike just a year-and-a-half ago.

CATTLE

Beef production was up 8-10 percent in April compared to the previous year. With these large numbers, along with questionable domestic demand, the market took a bloodbath. Record high feed prices, along with fed cattle prices lower than the mid-'80s disaster, have meant horrible returns despite what seemed like low feeder prices when placements were made.

The April 7 state *Cattle-On-Feed Report* showed total cattle on feed and March placements down 1 percent from a year ago. Hopefully, this is an indication that the glut of cattle coming to market will slow by the end of May. However, this does not mean the huge supply of feeder cattle will go away. The USDA, as mentioned, is opening up CRP ground that is not highly erodible for pasture and haying from July 1 to Sept. 30. This should help keep some of the cattle off feed for a bit longer. But we will still need feed prices to drop sharply to pull the cattle industry out of the tailspin. We can't cut numbers much before the 1997 calf crop.

DAIRY OUTLOOK

by Larry G. Hamm

Milk prices are on the way up. Unfortunately, they are still not rising as fast as producer costs; therefore, profit margins will continue to be squeezed.

On April 19, the wholesale dairy markets surged upward. There were bids for one carlot of each of the three grades (AA, A and B) of butter traded on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME). Since no one supplied any butter at the bid prices, the bid prices became the market quote. Over the past two weeks, Grade A butter has risen 12 cents per pound above the 65 cent-per-pound support price that it had been trading for since Feb. 1, 1996. The wholesale butter price sets prices for most of the cream-based dairy product markets and is also a major component in generating dollars on producer paychecks.

At the same time butter markets were strengthening, the wholesale cheese markets were also shooting higher. The price for 40-pound blocks on the National Cheese Exchange (NCE) rose 10 cents per pound. However, unlike the CME, actual products did trade on the NCE. In total, 35 carlots

of block cheese were traded on the two trading days of April 19 and 26. In the same period, 40 carloads of barrel cheese were actually traded. In recent years, the NCE has increasingly been a market where cheese is actually traded.

In the past, when cheese markets went up, market analysts would predict what would happen to the Minnesota-Wisconsin (M-W). The first anniversary of the demise of the M-W is here. Analysts have not had the same success predicting the level of the Basic Formula Price (BFP) as they did with the old M-W.

Clearly, the rising cheese and butter markets will lift the BFP. The cheese market jump suggests that the BFP will go up around \$1 per cwt. However, this may not happen. The next BFP will only go up perhaps \$0.20 to \$0.30 per cwt. What happens during May to the dairy product markets will help determine whether the remaining \$0.70 per cwt will make it through to producer prices.

In any event, milk prices are moving in the right direction if the dairy industry is going to have enough market revenue to generate the supply of milk currently called for by market demand. Unfortunately, the milk price increases are not coming fast enough to offset the current critical income shortfall for the Michigan and U.S. dairy industries.

EGGS

by Henry Larzelere

Egg prices near the end of April were about 16 cents a dozen above last year. In contrast, prices were 26 cents a dozen above the early part of the month. Partially offsetting these higher egg prices, feed ingredient prices were almost 12 cents a dozen eggs above last year.

Prices at wholesale in New York for Grade A large eggs in cartons will likely average in the low 80s, the usual seasonal low egg price time of the year. During the July, August, September quarter, prices will probably move to the upper 80s or low 90s.

There have been small increases in hens and pullets on farms and in production since the first of the year. Furthermore, the hatchery reports have shown increases in the egg-type chick hatch in the first three months of the year. Apparently, the relatively high egg prices have encouraged the expansion of laying flocks in spite of the current uncertainty in the feed ingredient price situation.

We need to watch the current planting season for the feed situation. Also, the hatchery reports will be a key since the months of March, April and May are usually the months in which the largest hatches occur for potential expansion of the laying flocks.

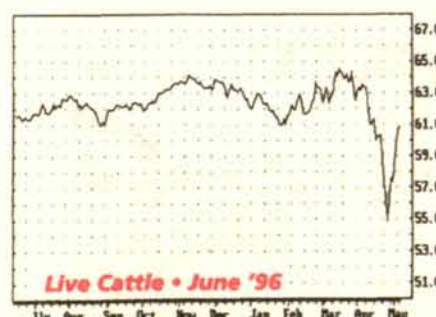
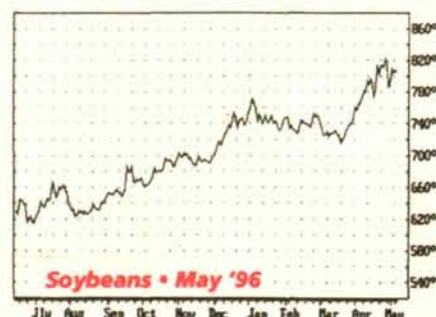
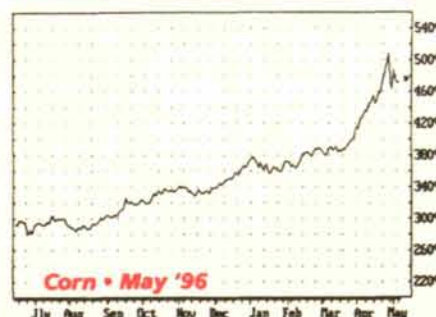
BROILERS

by Henry Larzelere

It is pertinent to consider the broiler situation at this time. As we approach summer, we will notice the strongest demand time of the year. This means that significantly more broiler meat can be sold at given prices in the summer than at other times of the year.

It had been predicted earlier that about 6 percent more broilers would be produced in 1996 than in 1995. So far, in the first three months of 1996, about 2.7 percent more broilers were produced than a year earlier. At the same time, prices were about 6 percent above the same period in 1995. If broiler production increases about 3 percent above the previous year, prices will be about 1 cent a pound higher than last year. ■

COMMODITY PRICE TRENDS



DTN buys Broadcast Partners

Data Transmission Network Corp. (DTN) reports that it acquired substantially all assets of Broadcast Partners for \$63.5 million and assumed certain liabilities estimated to be \$9.5 million.

DTN will receive about 39,000 agricultural subscribers, according to Reuters news service. The acquisition will bring the total DTN subscribers in the agribusiness industry to more than 115,000 and the total Data Transmission subscribers for all services to more than 140,000.

The company will not convert FarmDayta subscribers' systems to Data Transmission equipment and will continue to market the services under the FarmDayta name, according to Reuters.

Broadcast Partners was a partnership formed in 1990 by Farmland Industries Inc., Pioneer Hi-Bred International Inc. and IAA Communications Co., Reuters reports. ■

Business Strategies



Glenn Kole, District Extension Farm Management Agent, MSU Extension

Special thanks to Jim Monroe, FSA Ag Credit, Traverse City All Borrowers of Farm Service Agency (Formerly FmHA), Effective Immediately:

- Direct Farm Ownership Loan Funds Cannot Be Used For:
 - a. Any existing (non-agency) debt refinancing — guaranteed farm ownership loans (guaranteed by FSA, but financed by another commercial lender) are still eligible for refinancing.
 - b. Pollution abatement or pollution control — not eligible for direct or guaranteed FSA loans.
 - c. "Non-Farm" enterprises — cannot be directly financed or guaranteed by FSA.

Market-basket survey detects increase in grocery prices

American consumers paid \$1.36 more for a sample market basket of groceries during the first quarter of 1996 than they did during the last quarter of 1995, according to the latest informal national survey of retail food prices conducted by the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF).

During the first quarter of this year, consumers paid an average of \$31.67 for 16 food items. The average for the fourth quarter of 1995 was \$30.31. This year's first quarter average is also higher compared with a year ago — the first quarter of 1995 — when the average was \$30.22.

AFBF conducts its informal quarterly market-basket survey to help track retail food prices to ensure they are in line with prices received by the nation's farmers and ranchers. While grocery prices are up this quarter, the farmers' and ranchers' share remains steady. The farm value of each food dollar spent in the United States is approximately 22 cents. The largest component of the consumer's food dollar is labor at about 36 cents.

Compared to last quarter, overall retail food prices remained fairly steady, but increases were noted in many items. The largest increase was for a five-pound bag of flour, which increased by 21 cents over the previous quarter, for a national average of \$1.31. A related item, a 20-ounce loaf of bread, increased 12 cents, to \$1.11.

According to Terry Francl, a senior economist for AFBF, a factor in those price increases is higher wheat prices, which are currently about 45 percent above a year ago. Francl added, however, wheat prices are a comparatively small factor, considering the typical farm-to-retail price spread for wheat.

"For cereals and bakery products, typically the farm value is less than 8 percent of the retail cost," he said. "But whenever wheat prices are up, we often encounter retail price increases for those products in a magnitude beyond that dictated by the wheat price alone."

Joining flour and bread as items with higher prices this quarter were: bacon, \$2.08 per pound, up 18 cents; potatoes, \$1.68 per five pounds, up 17 cents; apples, 97 cents per pound, up 14 cents; whole milk, \$2.39 per gallon, up 13 cents; sirloin tip roast, \$2.72 per pound, up 11 cents; breakfast cereal, \$2.59 per 10-ounce box, up 10 cents.

Items with increases of less than 10 cents were: eggs, \$1.06 per dozen, up 8 cents; cheddar cheese, \$2.90 per pound, up 8 cents; pork chops, \$3.14 per pound, up 5 cents; whole fryers, 93 cents per pound, up 4 cents; cooking oil, \$2.39 per 32 ounces, up 1 cent; and mayonnaise, \$2.58 per 32 ounces, up 1 cent.

Only two items on the list had lower prices this quarter. A 32-ounce container of shortening was \$2.21, down 3 cents, and ground chuck was \$1.61 per pound, down 2 cents. ■

Ag lending policy changes from the new farm bill

- Special Beginning Farmer or Rancher Operating Loans are no longer authorized — neither direct nor guaranteed loans. However, the 50 percent joint financing program or 30 percent down payment program for Beginning Farmers for farm-ownership loans are still available.

- Soil and Water Conservation and Protection remains an authorized loan purpose for direct or guaranteed loans.

Delinquent Borrowers with FSA, Beginning Immediately:

- Annual direct operating loans to delinquent borrowers shall not be made.

Emergency Loans (FSA)

- Emergency loan disbursements shall be limited to a maximum of \$500,000, including any and all outstanding emergency loan balances owed by the applicant or any member of an entity is liable for, at that time.

Any Borrower who has Received Loan Debt Forgiveness, Debt Settlement, Net Recovery Buyout, Bankruptcy, or Payout under a Guaranteed Loan Loss Claim is not eligible for any Direct or Guaranteed Loan.

- Restructured or Partial FSA-office debt write-downs remain eligible for direct or guaranteed loans if they are otherwise eligible, but funds are only for annual farm operating purposes.

FSA loans already obligated to applicant on or before April 4, 1996 will be honored, subject to conditions at time of approval.

FSA loans not obligated by April 5, 1996 and funds that were for a single purpose no longer eligible will be denied the loan, and applicant will be notified. If a portion of not-obligated funds only is now ineligible, applicant will be notified of such; a meeting with applicant can be initiated to determine if a feasible plan under the new rules can be made.

Furthermore, although regulations are not cast in concrete yet, indications from the same Farm Bill are that:

- Direct farm ownership FSA funds will be restricted to "borrowers with less than ten years experience, or less than ten years of USDA loan program participation."

- Direct operating FSA loans will be restricted to borrowers with less than five years of farming experience. (There may be a two-year "phase-in" of these experience restrictions.)

Guaranteed loans do not have these experience restrictions.

Farm bill authorization national loan limits

- Direct Farm Ownership Loans: \$85 million annually

- Direct Farm Operating Loans: \$500 million annually

- Guaranteed Farm Ownership Loans: \$1.9-2.1 billion annually

- Guaranteed Farm Operating Loans: \$600-750 million annually.

Conclusion

To re-emphasize, the new Farm Bill provisions concerning FSA borrowing (effective either immediately or by July 5, 1996 if not otherwise stated) will:

- Focus what relatively little direct lending is available to "new" farmers, based on years of experience

- Disallow direct loan refinancing of any commercial credit — only guaranteed loans will be allowed

- Make delinquent borrowers ineligible for direct operating loans,

- Disallow any FSA loans whatsoever for those who have had previous FSA debt forgiveness, debt settlement, net recovery buyout, bankruptcy, or guaranteed loan loss claim (this includes any partnership or corporation if any partner or stockholder had the above).

Farmers with more than 10 years experience no longer have direct FSA lending as an option. Delinquent borrowers must get their existing loans "current" before obtaining any further direct operating loans. Other provisions, such as "leaseback" of farm property by former owners after loan liquidation is no longer allowed. "Beginning Farmers" now have first priority to purchase farmland FSA holds in inventory.

Call your local USDA Farm Service Agency office, or FSA Public Affairs Specialist Marilyn Aycock at (202)720-5237 for more information. ■

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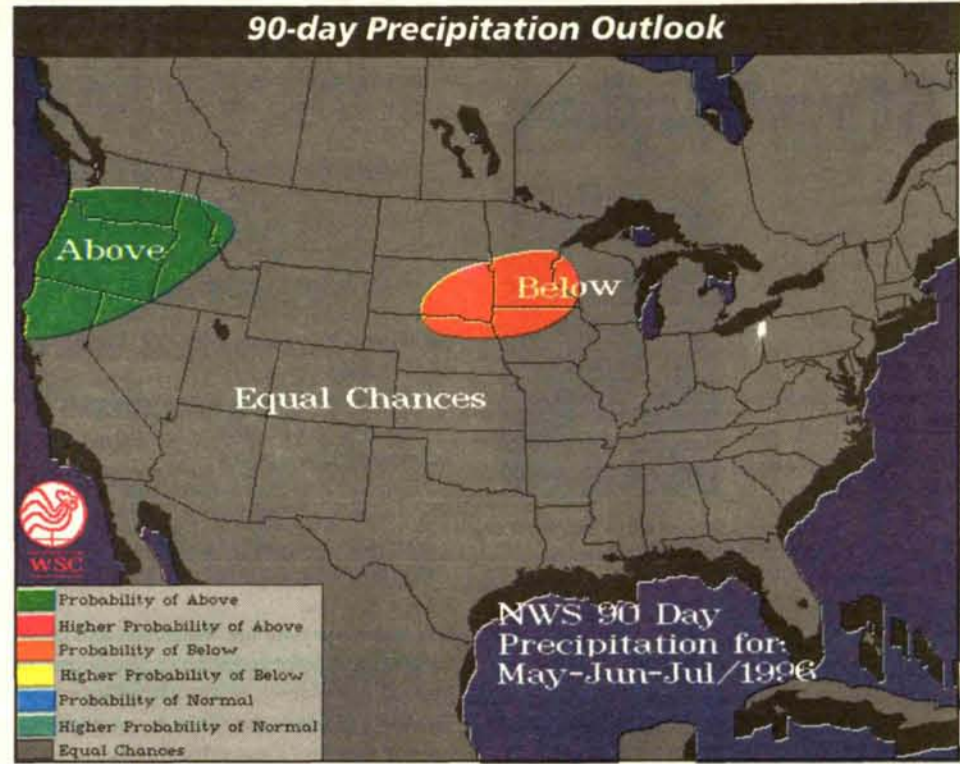
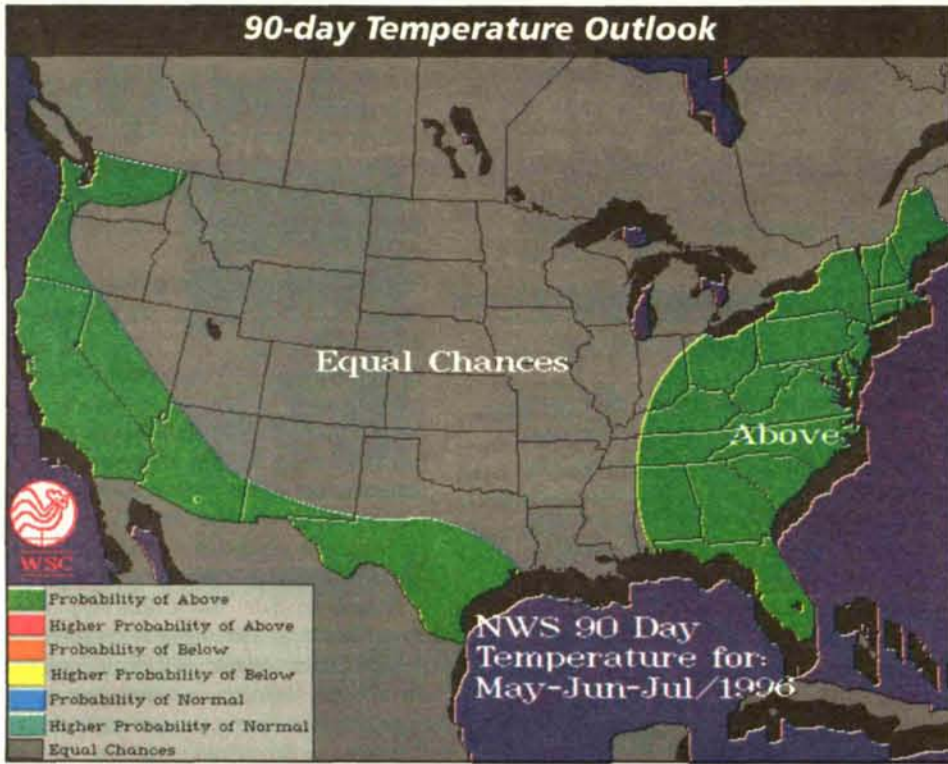
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Weather Outlook

by Dr. Jeff Andresen, agricultural meteorologist, Department of Geography, Michigan State University

Northwesterly jet stream flow and cold temperatures persisted across Michigan during much of April, with average monthly temperatures remaining 3-6 degrees below normal and above-normal precipitation.

New Climate Prediction Center new long lead outlooks for the coming months continue to be vague, calling for near equal probabilities of above-, near-, and below normal temperatures and precipitation for May into the early summer. Beyond that, normal to above normal temperatures are favored into the mid summer, with normal to below normal

temperatures possible by early fall. Near equal odds of all three precipitation categories are forecast through early fall.

With the loss of National Weather Service agricultural products and services last year, the MSU Ag. Weather Office has begun to run the specific minimum temperature forecast for 25 agricultural locations around the state.

The forecast, is a 12-24 hour estimate of minimum temperature based on numerical computer guidance combined with the cloud and wind forecasts adjusted by climatological data at each of the sites. The forecasts are generally more accurate than the regular zone forecasts alone.

The forecast is available for the upcoming evening/morning by 2:45 p.m. each day. It is currently available to those who have Internet access, on the MSU Ag. Weather Office home page, located at <http://cumulus.geo.msu.edu/~manager/>. Please call the Ag Weather Office at 517/355-0231 for further details.

Michigan Weather Summary

| 4/1/96-4/30/96 | Temperature | | Growing Degree Days | | Precipitation | |
|------------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Observed mean | Deviation from normal | Actual Accumulated | Normal Accumulated | Actual (inch) | Normal (inch) |
| Houghton | 32.9 | -4.5 | 3 | 55 | 3.38 | 2.28 |
| Marquette | 31.9 | -5.0 | 11 | 55 | 6.15 | 2.28 |
| Escanaba | 34.1 | -4.9 | 6 | 24 | 2.66 | 2.43 |
| Sault ste. Marie | 32.6 | -5.4 | 0 | 24 | 4.12 | 2.43 |
| Lake city | 37.3 | -4.7 | 40 | 68 | 3.03 | 2.69 |
| Pellston | 36.0 | -3.8 | 26 | 68 | 4.13 | 2.69 |
| Traverse city | 39.3 | -3.0 | 52 | 68 | 3.86 | 2.69 |
| Alpena | 37.0 | -3.5 | 30 | 60 | 2.64 | 2.52 |
| Houghton lake | 38.0 | -4.9 | 43 | 60 | 2.56 | 2.52 |
| Muskegon | 42.1 | -3.3 | 52 | 90 | 2.47 | 3.16 |
| Vestaburg | 40.6 | -5.1 | 62 | 101 | 3.39 | 3.07 |
| Bad axe | 40.1 | -4.0 | 51 | 97 | 3.67 | 2.55 |
| Saginaw | 42.5 | -3.0 | 72 | 97 | 3.22 | 2.55 |
| Grand rapids | 43.5 | -2.7 | 73 | 124 | 2.39 | 3.41 |
| South bend | 47.1 | -1.9 | 128 | 124 | 3.45 | 3.41 |
| Coldwater | 43.3 | -3.9 | 72 | 122 | 4.23 | 3.19 |
| Lansing | 43.2 | -2.7 | 76 | 122 | 3.58 | 3.19 |
| Detroit | 45.9 | -1.5 | 104 | 111 | 2.37 | 3.21 |
| Flint | 42.7 | -3.3 | 70 | 111 | 2.79 | 3.21 |
| Toledo | 47.4 | -0.3 | 130 | 111 | 4.38 | 3.21 |

Observed totals are accumulated from April 1. Normals are based on district averages.

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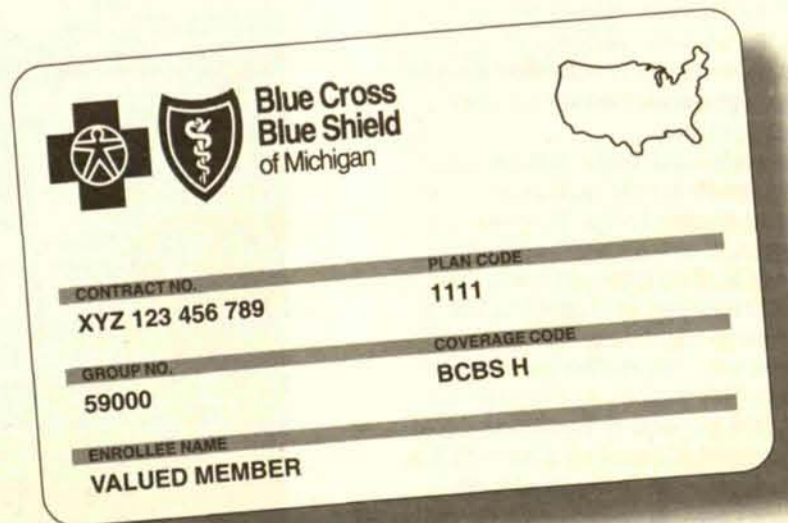
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Weed Strategies

Dr. Karen Renner and Dr. Jim Kells, Department of Crop and Soil Sciences, Michigan State University



This article provides an update for weed control in field crops since *E-434 Weed Control Guide for Field Crops* was published in December.

Soybeans

Stellar is now registered for use in soybeans. Stellar is a prepackaged mixture of Cobra and Resource. If a farmer applies 5 ounces/Acre of Stellar it is equal to a tank mixture of 4 oz/A of Resource and 6 oz/A of Cobra. Always add crop oil concentrate to Stellar at 1/2% v/v (this is equal to 4 pints of crop oil in 100 gal. of spray solution). If spray gallonage is less than 25 gal. of water per acre, keep crop oil concentrate at a minimum of 1 pint/Acre.

Stellar will control many broadleaf weeds since it contains both Resource and Cobra. Broadleaf weeds controlled include velvetleaf, common and giant ragweed, pigweed, and eastern black nightshade. The label states that Stellar will control common lambsquarters and cocklebur but Michigan State University data shows regrowth of common lambsquarters and common cocklebur, following Stellar application. Smartweed will *not* be controlled by Stellar.

Apply Stellar in 10 to 30 gal. of water per acre at 30 to 60 psi. This is a contact herbicide so thorough coverage is important.

Stellar can be tank mixed with Select for postemergence grass control. Spray pressure should be a minimum of 40 psi. Some grass antagonism may occur, so a separate application is suggested for control of quackgrass and other difficult-to-control grasses.

The rain free period for Stellar is one hour. Do not apply Stellar within 90 days of harvest or after podset. The field cannot be grazed and the straw and hay cannot be used for feed or bedding.

Steel is a prepackaged mixture of Pursuit Plus (prepackaged mixture of Prowl and Pursuit) and Scepter. Steel will be sold as a co-pack (double jug) in 1996 and a premix in 1997. In the copack, Herbicide CB (Scepter) is applied at 1/2 pt/A and Herbicide CG (Pursuit Plus) is applied at 2.5 pt/A. Steel will provide better cocklebur and common ragweed control than Pursuit Plus because of the addition of Scepter. Crop rotation restrictions are: Field corn and seed corn — 9.5 months; wheat — 4 months; oats, sweet corn — 18 months; potatoes — 26 months; sugarbeets — 40 months.

Prestige is a formulation of Poast Plus marketed by Cyanamid. Application rates are the same as for Poast Plus. Do *not* tank-mix Prestige with Pursuit, because there will be no grass activity from the Prestige; the grass control that will occur is only from Pursuit.

Status is a formulation of Blazer marketed by Cyanamid. Application rates are the same as for Blazer. Two-inch common ragweed will be controlled by 1 pint/Acre of Status. Therefore, if common ragweed has emerged in a field with a planned Pursuit POST application, Status can be added at 1 pint/Acre to control small common ragweed.

Command 3ME is a new formulation of Command available in a limited supply in 1996. This is a microencapsulated formulation of Command that will allow Command to be applied preemergence. Setbacks from sensitive areas are still required. These include: 1,200 feet from towns, housing developments, commercial fruit and vegetable production, and commercial greenhouses and nurseries; and 300 feet from desirable plants.

Roundup Ultra is a new formulation of Roundup. Roundup Ultra contains surfactants. No additional surfactants, additives containing surfactants, pH adjusting agents or buffering agents should be added. Nitrogen additives are allowed such as ammonium sulfate. The rain-free requirement is 1-2 hours. The application rates for Roundup Ultra are the same as Roundup.

Weed control update for 1996

Corn

Accent has received supplemental labels for tank-mixes with the following herbicides: Exceed, Resource or Scorpion III. The Accent rate for each tank-mix is 1/2 oz. per acre (1 soluble pouch for 4 acres). Table 1 describes the rates, additives and

timings labeled for each tank-mix.

Basis is now labeled for tank-mixing with atrazine 90DF and Marksman. Basis also has a supplemental label for tank-mixing with Scorpion III. A supplemental label has also been issued for a Basis + Prowl tank mix for control of crabgrass in corn.

Table 1 — New tank-mix partners for Accent

| Tank-mix herbicide | Application rate | Additives | Maximum corn height |
|--------------------|----------------------------|---|---------------------|
| Exceed | 0.5 oz/A (1 pouch/8 A) | Surfactant (1/4%) or Crop Oil Conc. (1%) + 28% N (2-4 qt/A) or AMS (2-4 lb/A) | 24" or 6-collar |
| Resource | 4-8 fl. oz/A | Crop Oil Conc. (1%) + 28% N (2-4 qt/A) or AMS (2-4 lb/A) | 24" or 6-collar |
| Scorpion III | 0.25 lb/A (1 pouch/2 A) | Surfactant (1/4%) + 28% N (2-4 qt/A) or AMS (2-4 lb/A) | 8" |

Table 2 — New tank-mix partners for Basis

| Tank-mix herbicide | Application rate | Additives |
|--------------------|------------------|--|
| Atrazine | 1/2-1 lb 90DF/A | Crop Oil Conc. (1%) + 28% N (2-4 qt/A) or AMS (2-4 lb/A) |
| Marksman | 1 pt/A | Crop Oil Conc. (1%) + 28% N (2-4 qt/A) or AMS (2-4 lb/A) |
| Scorpion III | 0.25 lb/A | Surfactant (1/4%) + (1 pouch/2 A) 28% N (2-4 qt/A) or AMS (2-4 lb/A) |
| Prowl | 1.8-3 pt/A | Surfactant (1/4%) + 28% N (2-4 qt/A) or AMS (2-4 lb/A) or Crop Oil Conc. (1%) without fertilizer |

MSU has not studied this combination for crabgrass control. Application rates and additives are listed in Table 2.

Poast Plus is now labeled for broadcast "over-the-top" postemergence application in set-hoxydim-resistant (SR) corn. *Poast Plus can be applied only to SR corn.* Application of Poast Plus without other herbicides can be made to SR corn until pollen shed. Do not apply within 45 days of harvest for corn forage/silage or within 60 days of harvest for grain. Additives are crop oil concentrate or Dash. Labeled tank-mix herbicides are atrazine, Basagran or Laddok. Tank-mixing can reduce herbicidal activity of Poast Plus (antagonism) on some grass species, including barnyardgrass and yellow foxtail. For control of these species, Poast Plus should be applied at 36 oz/A. Do not tank-mix for quackgrass control.

SR corn hybrids are available in Michigan for 1996 (from DeKalb) but will be limited. Poast Plus offers an additional option for postemergence control of annual grasses in corn. [Note: SR corn is only tolerant to Poast Plus. Do not apply any other postemergence grass herbicide (i.e. Select, Fusion, Assurance II) to SR corn.] It will fit well for control of certain troublesome grasses in corn such as wild proso millet and wooly cupgrass (serious problems in other states). Poast Plus will also fit well on organic soils. ■

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Mexico to import more dry beans; prices begin to jump

Corn and soybeans have held the market spotlight setting near-record prices recently. However, announced sales of dry beans to Mexico and the threat of continuing inclement weather this spring has brought dry beans into the bidding war for corn and soybean acres.

In recent weeks, SECOFI, the Mexican government's Ministry of Commerce, has announced the auction of import license permits for two 100,000-metric-ton, the first 100,000 metric tons from a direct sale between the U.S. and Mexico on May 23 and the second 100,000 from an open auction between all of Mexico's trading partners in early June.

"Mexico has come to the realization that they really don't have the volume of high-quality dry beans to meet domestic needs there," stated MFB's Commodity Specialist Bob Boehm. "They are suffering some drought conditions in their major dry bean production areas, forcing them to go to international markets looking to secure some supplies."

"There's some concern with the way their economy is right now that there may need to be some credits offered through the GSM102 credit program, which is the food security portion of the farm bill," states Boehm. "Dry beans are considered to be a stable food item in Mexico, along with milk and corn, so it's going to be a very high priority to make sure that there are dry bean stock available on the shelves in Mexico."

"NAFTA has gotten us the regime to have the import license auction," explains Boehm. "That makes it easy to reduce their tariffs voluntarily. NAFTA opened the door and created the mechanism to where they could very easily just enlarge it from the original 53,600-metric-ton auction to these latest 100,000 amounts."

"For dry beans, NAFTA has still been a very good deal," stated Dale Kuenzli, executive director of Michigan Bean Commission.

On top of Mexican demands, the latest crop report indicates Michigan farmers will plant 40,000 fewer acres of dry beans this spring compared to last year, further raising bean marketing prices and adding to the speculation about the dry bean market.

According to Kuenzli, farmers' intentions to plant has shown a decrease from 390,000 acres last year to 350,000 acres.

"I believe with volatile grain prices and ever-increasing values of corn, wheat and soybeans, that we probably have lost another 25,000 acres since the report came out," Kuenzli explains.

Increasing bean prices may also confuse bean growers, states Kuenzli. He attributes that more to problems in Mexico and Latin American countries than to planting pressures in the United States. For example, pinto beans, one of Michigan's smaller dry bean crops, have increased in price by almost 50 percent in the last few weeks. Black beans have also

seen a sizable increase at the elevator during the past month, Kuenzli explains.

"Michigan black bean prices were extremely stable for the last several months," said Boehm. "Recently, we've seen a rise of \$2 to \$4 to \$5 per hundredweight, which is starting to get some interest on the part of growers. I think there's also some realization that, with the high corn and soybean prices, there's going to be a need to bid up prices to get enough acreage in," he adds.

"I think most producers have already made their decision that they're going to plant the grain," Kuenzli explains. "Whatever they do in beans, I anticipate that it will bode better for them than what it looked like a month ago."

Over the course of the last two planting seasons, price fluctuations have pushed bean prices as high as \$30 in 1994 to the \$15 range last year, according to Kuenzli. An average yield in '94 of approximately 1,350 pounds per acre, compared to 1,800 last year, he adds, contributed to the price movement.

"Spring planting weather will have a major influence on ultimate planted acreage," states Boehm. "But certainly the price run up here in the last few weeks in dry beans, whether they're navies or black beans, is going to make planting dry beans a more palatable option."

Tractors among the great safety risks on the farm

In spite of the safety features built into tractors, they are among the riskier pieces of equipment used on the farm.

"Tractors are highly related to death and injury on farms, contributing to about 43 percent of all fatal accidents," says Howard Doss, Michigan State University Extension agricultural safety specialist.

Though death by tractor can occur at any time of the year, most accidents occur in June, July and August, mostly because people are using tractors more often during those months.

Doss says that rushing to get things done, fatigue and preoccupation with other matters are among the causes of tractor-related deaths.

Many deaths occur, however, because tractor operators did not understand the hazards of tractor operation and became involved in accidents that, to them, were unexpected.

One reason that most row-crop tractors are risky to use is their high center of gravity. That makes them prone to tip over even on flat ground if the operator attempts a turn at too high a speed or turns the steering wheel too quickly.

Using tractors for the job for which they are intended can reduce the potential for death and injury. Using them properly includes avoiding sudden, sharp turns, driving too close to ditch banks and road edges or up or along steep slopes, and hitching to loads too heavy for the size of the tractor used, Doss says.

Also avoid starting off in low gear with a high engine speed, engaging the engine too quickly or accelerating quickly, especially when traveling uphill or pulling a heavy load.

Avoid hooking a tractor to an object that isn't meant to be pulled, such as a tree stump or a fence-post. Essentially, if the load isn't hitched to the three-point linkage or the object to be pulled doesn't have wheels, it isn't meant to be pulled by the typical farm tractor, Doss says.

"If a tractor is put into a circumstance where it is apt to tip over sideways or flip backward, chances are it will go over so quickly — in about 1.5 seconds — that the operator won't have time to react," Doss says.

Doss says that all operators, including those who will be working on the farm for the summer, should familiarize themselves with the basic requirements of tractor operation before the field work schedule becomes hectic.

Among the basics are:

- Lock brake pedals together before driving at transport speeds, such as when hauling hay or grain.
- Restrict tractor speed according to operating conditions. Always watch ahead for bumps, rocks, holes, ruts or depressions that could cause the tractor to tip sideways.
- Don't let the tractor bounce. This causes loss of steering control, and loss of steering control can mean a tip-over.
- Drive slowly where traction is questionable, such as on loose gravel, rain-slicked blacktop or mud. If in doubt, slow down anyway.
- Match the tractor to the weight of the load to be pulled. If you drive into a barn wall or through a fence when trying to stop, you have proof the load is too heavy for the tractor. Travel at safe speeds. If the load begins to fishtail, it's probably being pulled too fast or the hitch is not correct for the load.
- Slow down, using both brakes, before making turns, and turn as wide as possible to reduce centrifugal force, which can tip a tractor over.
- Use engine braking when going downhill. If in doubt, shift to the lowest gear possible before starting downhill and idle the engine speed back to slow. Do not disengage the engine while going downhill.
- Under no circumstances allow a rider on the tractor. It is against federal and state law to allow anyone under 16-years old to ride on a 20 PTO horsepower tractor.

Statistics show that people between 25- and 64-years old have 57 percent of the tractor accidents and that people between 5 and 24 account for 35 percent.

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Michigan potato growers control late blight

A decade can make a great difference. In the mid-1980s, potato acres in Michigan had fallen to an estimated 40,000 when processing plant closings forced growers to plant different crops. Today, the picture appears very different. New processing plants have sparked a sharp increase in potato acreage. Almost 80,000 acres were planted to potatoes in 1995. Unfortunately, there has been another increase that makes growers less enthusiastic — late blight.

"Late blight incidence reached a peak in 1994," says Don Smucker, Extension agent for Montcalm County. "Nearly every grower in the county was affected. Yields were down as growers had to kill many fields in late August to control the disease."

"Late blight blindsided us in 1994," confirms Dr. Mel Lacy, (recently retired) plant pathologist at Michigan State University (MSU). "The potential for disease had us concerned heading into 1995, but we were much better prepared. Our off-season educational efforts paid dividends. Although the conditions were very conducive for disease, growers in all four potato-growing regions where late blight occurred (Montcalm, Presque Isle, Bay and St. Joseph counties) kept it in check."

Lacy adds that the newer A2/US 8 late blight genotype brings new challenges to Michigan growers. However, as the disease changes, so must growers. They have to adjust their programs accordingly.

Growers must still pay attention to cultural practices — seed selection, rotation and destruction of cull piles. Lacy says growers really have to pay attention to some other practices because late blight can begin anywhere from weeds in the field edges to culls swept up in rock piles. He also reminds growers that buying certified seed does not necessarily ensure that it is completely free of late blight.

"Certified seed guidelines allow a 1-percent infection of late blight, which is enough to start trouble," Lacy warns. "Growers should make sure they have a solid relationship with their seed producers to ensure that the seed they buy is clean."

However, the biggest adaptations must be made to fungicide programs. "Growers have learned that they must spray fungicides early and often," says Smucker. "We shortened spray intervals



Typical late blight stem lesion.

to five days when the disease conditions were most severe as indicated by blight forecasting programs. We also encouraged growers to do everything possible to ensure complete spray coverage. This strategy worked. Of the 14,000 acres in Montcalm County, we had only 10 late blight findings — usually on the edges of fields or near irrigation pivots where spray coverage was inadequate."

Bob Walther grows 4,000 acres of potatoes for chipping and french fries near Clio, Mich. His late blight philosophy is simple — prevent the disease from getting a hold. His plan, however, takes commitment. He grows his own seed to make sure he is planting clean seed, maintains his rotation and makes sure all the culls are destroyed.

Walther has beefed up his spray program, too. He applies protectant fungicides (Bravo® EBCDs, coppers) on a five- to seven-day interval. He also makes two applications of Ridomil® MZ72 to control storage rots (Pythium leak, pink rot) and to help with late blight control.

"You can't cut corners with your fungicide program," Walther cautions. "Late blight is a major



Typical late blight leaf lesion.

challenge to the industry, but with proper attention it can be controlled. Last year, we continually took samples but found no disease incidence. Our commitment to prevention was the key."

Ciba Crop Protection's Plant Pathologist Dr. Bobby Bassi says, with the new Phytophthora strains, growers can't wait until they see late blight develop and expect to eliminate it. "Studies show that preventive use of Ridomil/Prepacks plus protectant fungicides is very effective," he says. "When alternated with protectant fungicides, metalaxyl (the active ingredient in Ridomil) works to stop late blight. But applications have to begin before infection — when foliage uniformly meets within the row across the field."

Dr. Marty Wiglesworth, Ciba research specialist, conducted two Ridomil/Prepack trials in Michigan in 1994 in the presence of the A-2 late blight strains. Those trials show 90-percent control, with a 20-percent increase in yield vs. protectants alone.

Bassi says that additional tests in Wisconsin, Minnesota, New York and Florida, in areas where the A-2 strain was present, confirm that the preventive, additive effect of both fungicides (metalaxyl and protectants) also leads to yield increases, delays disease onset and reduces disease severity.

Growers should not expect late blight to go away anytime soon. But heading into next season, there seems to be reason for optimism. Smucker says that seed-producing areas have not experienced as much late blight in 1995, so incoming seed should be cleaner. Plus, with continued good control programs, there should be less inoculum left-over from 1995.

"We learned a lot the past few seasons," says Smucker. "Last year we learned that late blight can be managed. There are many practices and products that growers can implement to curb the late blight outbreak. That should give growers the confidence they need for next season."

Late blight a serious problem

by Eric Fischer

Although it is different from the organism that caused the Irish potato famine nearly 150 years ago, late blight is a tremendous problem in the U.S. potato industry.

The main culprit is the US 8, or A2 strain that has been traced to Central Mexico, and it is thought to have spread through the trade of seed potatoes between countries. It has inundated nearly every state in the past three years and caused severe outbreaks of late blight. The strain has become so powerful that the principal pesticide used for control of late blight in the past — Metalaxl — is no longer effective, and new methods of control must be explored.

To explore these new methods, the Michigan Potato Commission called upon Michigan State University to bring an assistant visiting professor to focus specifically on late blight.

Dr. William Kirk, a potato specialist from Scotland, was hired to research potato late blight management procedures. By using money generated by the Michigan Potato Commission and various chemical companies, he has researched several techniques by using fungicide and variety trials.

According to Kirk, effective chemical control doesn't simply rest on the amount that's applied. "The answer to effective control lies in the timing and method of application of existing chemistries," he said. "Generally, late blight infections begin in areas of the crop that are underprotected, due to poor chemical application."

Kirk expects that genetics may someday play a role in resistance to late blight, but success hasn't been seen as of yet. "Major gene and horizontal resistance breeding techniques are under question at the moment as neither method has successfully produced marketable varieties with durable resistance against late blight," he explained.

Ben Kudwa, Executive Director of the Michigan Potato Commission, feels that many producers will be forced to exercise stricter management techniques. "We are going to see growers using better management techniques, such as taking care of cull piles and volunteer plants in the field that would normally just be allowed to grow," he said. "Simply put, old management techniques are being resurrected and re-looked at in order to control the source of the inoculum."

Kirk feels that in order for operations to survive, producers must be open to change. "Efficiency, mechanization, increased labor costs, and sociological and other economic pressures have led many potato production units to be rigid and resistant to change," he said. "In the longer term, a reassessment of current crop protection techniques may lead to an industry more able to resist the ravages of nature."

If you would like more information concerning late blight, contact Dr. William Kirk at (517) 353-4481.

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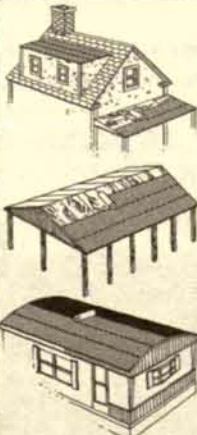
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Timing spring alfalfa harvest

by Mike Allen, Department of Animal Science, Michigan State University

Variation in weather makes it difficult to time alfalfa harvest for optimum quality. Finding a window of dry weather for cutting, wilting and chopping or baling forages is not easy, particularly in the spring. If alfalfa is harvested too early, the fiber content will be too low and the protein content will be too high. If alfalfa is harvested too late, energy and protein contents will be low, increasing the cost of supplements; and low fiber digestibility may decrease energy intake.

Beginning harvest at 40 percent neutral detergent fiber (NDF) will give about a seven-day window to complete harvesting. Filling horizontal silos with layers of increasing maturity will allow harvest to begin a little earlier at about 38 percent NDF because the layers of alfalfa are blended as the alfalfa is removed from the silo.

Although growing degree days (GDD) is not perfectly related to NDF content of alfalfa, it can be used to help predict when to start cutting.

Using GDD, we can predict NDF content within 3 percentage units 68 percent of the time. Thus, if you are using GDD (base 41°F) to begin cutting alfalfa at 40 percent NDF, in nearly seven out of 10 years the alfalfa will be between 37 and 43 percent NDF.

For an initial NDF content of 40 percent, start cutting at 750 GDD, base 41°F. It will take about 220 additional GDD to reach 45 percent NDF at 970 GDD, base 41°F. If you are storing the alfalfa in a



horizontal silo or are feeding it in a diet with a high NDF, low protein forage, start cutting at 680 GDD, base 41°F, which corresponds to 38 percent NDF.

Growing degree days is calculated many ways. It is important to make sure GDD is calculated using the same formula that was used to establish the relationship for these recommendations. Average the maximum and minimum temperature for each

day (24-hour period) beginning March 1, subtract the base temperature (41°F) and sum the growing degrees for all days that have positive numbers.

For example, if the maximum and minimum temperatures for one day are 75°F and 39°F, respectively, the average is 57 (75+39/2) and the growing degrees for this day are 16 (57-41). If the average is less than the base temperature, the difference will

be negative and the number should not be included in the sum.

The growing degree days calculated in the weekly MSU Extension Crop Advisory Team Alert cannot be used at this time. Even though one uses a base temperature of 42°F, it is calculated using a different method, and there is no way to convert growing degree days calculated by one method to another.

For increased accuracy, it is best to measure the minimum and maximum temperatures as close to the alfalfa field as possible. You can use an inexpensive minimum/maximum thermometer and read it every day, or you can purchase a datalogger that records temperature automatically.

When the weekly GDD accumulation reaches around 550, begin measuring it on the farm daily until the correct growing degree days is reached. If you choose to use this method, remember that it isn't perfect, but it is probably better than what you have used in the past.

Predicting alfalfa NDF using this simple method should be avoided when there is inadequate soil moisture during the growing season because growing degree days accumulate with little or no response in plant growth. Because of this, growing degree days is highly related to quality only for spring harvest alfalfa with adequate rainfall and not for subsequent cuttings. ■

Plan for good safety routines for farm kids

Before the planting season becomes too hectic for some serious prevention planning, talk with farm youngsters and take steps to minimize their potential for injury.

"Adults can substantially reduce the child's risk of serious injury or death if they educate their children about the hazards that are often associated with farming," says Howard Doss, Michigan State University Extension agricultural safety specialist.

Nationally, about 300 children are killed and 24,000 are injured, about 5,000 of whom are maimed for life by farm accidents.

Statistics show that 42 percent of the accidents are caused by kids getting caught in grain augers, 25 percent by tractor accidents, 11 percent by power takeoff shaft entanglement and 6 percent by getting caught in conveyor belts.

Kids are most apt to be involved in a farm accident when they are 4 or 14.

The former age group, according to Doss, is at risk because it is the time of their life when they are apt to be the most mobile and inquisitive and do not fully comprehend the hazards that surround them.

The high accident rate among 14-year-olds is attributed to their beginning to do more adult chores on the farm and lack of experience in risk reduction.

Doss says parents should take time now to develop child safety plans and teach their kids how

to avoid accidents. He recommends the following:

- Do not allow children to ride on tractors, implements or other equipment. Extra riders can easily tumble from equipment and fall into the path of tires. Don't allow play on farm equipment. Pull key, set the parking brake and lock equipment to ensure that children cannot accidentally start engines.
- Know where children are at all times. Do not allow children near any operating equipment. Establish "safety zones" from which children can still watch but are out of the way of tractors, implements and other equipment. Fencing in play areas may be useful in keeping kids out of dangerous areas.
- Give children age-appropriate chores. Children are not small adults and they may make decisions that put them at risk. Only a parent knows when a child is mature enough to learn and safely handle a new task. Make sure a child is competent to do the job safely.
- Make sure children receive safety training before the onset of each new farm-related activity. Teach children that the safe way is the only way and reinforce safety each time a child does the task. Children learn their ABCs by hearing them spoken repeatedly. Take this same "over and over" approach to teaching farm safety and remember that setting a good example is the best teaching

tool a parent has.

- Train children during low- or non-production activities. Don't try to train a youth on a new job when there is pressure to complete a task on time. Wait until the work schedule allows time for a thorough training period so emphasis can be placed on a positive learning experience.

Taking time for proper training allows the parent time to tell the child how to do the job, and demonstrate the skills needed, and gives the parent an opportunity to provide positive feedback on the youth's performance. Pointers on improving performance and efficiency can also be offered.

- Supervision of youth in farm work activities is critical. Part of the parent's responsibility is to train a child with the correct work methods and to follow up with visual checks and supervision aimed at encouraging the child to adopt good safe work habits. Remember that work breaks are important for youth as well as adults.
- Inspect the farm for safety hazards. Get down on your child's level and look at the farm from their perspective. For example, a tractor tire leaning against the barn wall can fall on an unsuspecting child. Openings between gate posts and fences may be too small for livestock to escape but just the right size for a child to enter. ■

Like thieves in the night, cutworms feed on corn plants mostly after dark. Failure to spot the early signs of damage can mean severe losses later. Clean fields are less likely to experience cutting than fields that were weedy when tilled or planted. Watch for moth flights, and note the number of growing degree days (GDD). About 300 (base 50) GDD after a flight, scout fields for damage. Begin looking for extremely small holes in leaves. If you don't have moth flight information, start checking plants as soon as they emerge. As the larvae grow, they will cut the plant close to the soil surface and cause wilting and death. A rescue treatment may be needed, especially to control younger, actively feeding larvae. Young larvae can feed on plants for several days and cause extensive damage before they pupate and become adult moths. ■

Purple corn syndrome often occurs during a cold, wet spring, but can be caused by several interacting factors. Some hybrids are genetically prone to produce more of the purple pigment anthocyanin. Different hybrids under equal stress may therefore show varying amounts of purple discoloration. Other factors that contribute to purpling are deficient phosphorus levels in the plant; slow early root growth; poor root development due to soil compaction and cool, wet soil conditions; root injury from starter fertilizer or herbicides; and insect feeding. A careful examination of the roots' shape and condition is the key to diagnosing possible causes and remedies. ■

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Discussion Topic *Your need to get involved in the election process*

June 1996
A monthly resource for the Community Action Groups of Michigan Farm Bureau



Farm Bureau has strong policy encouraging members to get actively involved in the election process on the local, state and national level. For a variety of reasons, the election of 1996 could be pivotal for the agricultural community.

First of all, many issues of crucial importance to farmers — such as farmland preservation and transportation funding — may not be acted upon until the next Legislature is elected. Second, although term limits have not yet kicked in here in Michigan (some 20 other states have also imposed term limits over the past six years), their impact is beginning to be felt.

"The impact of term limits will be felt this year on the local and county level," said MFB Public Affairs Director Al Almy. "Local officials understand that term limits for state legislators will take effect in 1998, opening up 80 or more seats in the state House."

These local officials understand the implications. Today's state legislator probably began his or her political career as a local elected official, perhaps a township supervisor, county commissioner

or sheriff. "So, for 1996, Farm Bureau members ought to take a very hard look at who is running for these township or county offices and be very active in supporting who they think would be the best candidates. Two years from now, in 1998, these candidates may be leading contenders for state legislative seats. I urge Community Action Group members to take a hard look at candidates, get involved and support those best qualified to serve not only on the local level, but perhaps the state level in the future," Almy said.

There's another important reason to pay close attention to not only local races in 1996, but legislative contests as well, according to Almy. There are about a dozen state representatives who are not seeking re-election this year — leaders like Paul Hillemonds, Gary Randall and Carl Gnodtke. "Assuming the candidates elected in 1996 to fill these vacancies will seek re-election in 1998, and having served one two-year term already, they will have an edge in terms of seniority and knowledge of the legislative process and important issues," Almy said. "It's not at all unlikely that these so-called veterans will be in line for committee chairmanships, maybe even House leadership positions. The people you elect this year may be House leaders in 1998. Therefore, in those races for open state House seats this year, Farm Bureau members should go through the same evaluation and thought process as they will do with local races," he said.

Term limits are not the only change affecting the state's political process this year. Community Action Group members have probably heard about the federally mandated "motor voter law," which will undoubtedly result in more Michigan citizens registered to vote. But that's only half the formula. People still have to go to polls and vote. "Automatic voter registration is a bigger opportunity and challenge than people might think," said Almy. "The real test is, do these newly registered people get to the polls and vote?"

That's where farmers have an edge. "A high percentage of farmers are not only registered, they also reliably vote. We estimate that 75 percent or more Farm Bureau members vote each election year. That steadfast participation in the election process is one of the reasons the agricultural community has been so politically effective. It's not just voter registration — it's how you make your participation in the election cycle count. It's how many people vote," Almy said.

What about voting by mail? Oregon recently received nationwide publicity for their successful use of mail ballots during a special election to fill the U.S. Senate seat vacated by Sen. Robert Packwood. Is such a system a viable possibility for Michigan?

Farm Bureau policy opposes vote-by-mail except for those who qualify for absentee ballots. "We oppose vote-by-mail because it opens up the opportunity for some misrepresentation and elec-

tion irregularities," said Almy. "We think there's more accountability and visibility in our present system, where people have to go to a polling place, identify themselves and vote."

In June, Farm Bureau will conduct its annual Young People's Citizenship Seminar at Alma College. Over 250 of the state's top high school juniors and seniors, selected and sponsored by your county Farm Bureaus, will participate in a week of intensive, motivational activities designed to encourage their participation in the political process.

Farmers serve as role models for these young people. Your participation in political campaigns, your visibility in supporting "Friends of Agriculture," and your presence at your local polling place for the Aug. 6 primary and the Nov. 5 general election are crucial to your industry and community. ■

Discussion Questions

- 1) How does involvement in election-year politics make a difference?
- 2) In what ways do term limits bring about more responsibility in state government?
- 3) In what specific ways has your Community Action Group been active in past elections?
- 4) In what ways will your group be active in the 1996 elections?
- 5) In what ways has your group been active in providing input to your county candidate evaluation process?

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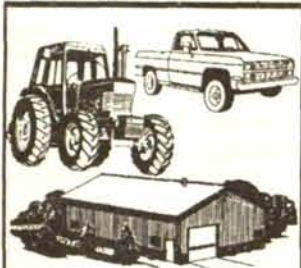
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03

Farm Commodities

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05

Livestock

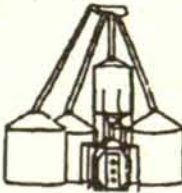
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05

Livestock

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05

Livestock

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05

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06

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07

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11

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13

Business Opportunities

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14

Real Estate

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15

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19

General

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General

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22

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23

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25

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Yellow nutsedge finally meets its match

Ample rainfall last year was a mixed blessing for Mark Vanderhyde.

The rain resulted in excellent corn yields. But, like a lot of Michigan farmers, it meant that Vanderhyde was faced with his worst-ever infestation of yellow nutsedge, a weed that thrives in wet soils. The population of the perennial weed, which had been building in recent years, exploded in 1995.

"The yellow nutsedge was pretty severe," recalls Vanderhyde, who farms near Sparta. "In past years, it was just in the low spots. But last year, when I was scouting, it had spread throughout the field in several cases."



Like many perennial weeds, yellow nutsedge is difficult to control because of its extensive underground root system, and because it grows from underground tubers.

Based on past experience, Vanderhyde figured he was in for a battle just to keep the weed suppressed.

Instead, he was able to get almost complete control of the weed with Permit[®], a postemergence herbicide introduced by Monsanto Co. in 1995. The herbicide primarily controls a wide range of broad-leaf weeds, including velvetleaf, cocklebur and common ragweed. It has the added benefit of handling yellow nutsedge.

"Nothing has been very effective on nutsedge in the past," says Vanderhyde. "Permit did an excellent job. When we chopped the corn, the yellow nutsedge was dead. Permit did a good job on velvetleaf, too."

Vanderhyde's experience with Permit was mirrored in Michigan State University (MSU) research last year.

A single application of the herbicide controlled 83 to 84 percent of yellow nutsedge in MSU trials in 1995. The next best postemergence herbicide provided about 50 percent control.

"Control from Permit on yellow nutsedge was impressive," says Jim Kells, MSU Extension weed scientist. "It is clearly the strongest herbicide for yellow nutsedge in corn. Permit will become the product of choice for nutsedge in corn."

Adds Allen Pung, of Clarksville Elevator, Clarksville, Mich.: "It's the best thing I've seen on

yellow nutsedge.

"When we sprayed some of it several years ago under an Experimental Use Permit (EUP), we knew we were onto something," he says. "The following year we noticed a lot less nutsedge. Permit gets down in the nutlets and kills them."

Based on proliferation of the weed in recent years, the herbicide could get a good test in 1996. Infestations of the weed have been worsening because of the relatively wet conditions prevalent in many parts of the state the past few years, explains Kells.

"Last year was a big year for yellow nutsedge, and the year before it was a big problem, too," he says. "It's a serious weed in the state. I think we're going to have lots of nutsedge in 1996."

Like many perennials, yellow nutsedge is difficult to control because of its extensive root system and its ability to reproduce vegetatively under the soil surface.

The weed, which is grass-like in appearance, is not actually a grass, says Kells. Stems grow erect and are solid, with a triangular cross section. Leaves are yellowish green and narrow. They appear to grow from three sides of the stem when viewed from above. The plant, which can reach a height of 8 to 24 inches, produces seeds, but normally they are sterile.

The plant grows from tiny tubers, or nutlets. Control with tillage can be difficult, since the nutlets are found 4 to 6 inches beneath the soil surface. In



Mark Vanderhyde, Sparta, Mich., holds the remains of a yellow nutsedge plant that was controlled with Permit, a new postemergence corn herbicide. Vanderhyde says the herbicide also handled velvetleaf and was safe to the crop.

fact, under wet conditions, tillage can actually help spread the weed within a field, says Kells.

A single yellow nutsedge plant is capable of producing over 100 nutlets from which new plants can grow. So, populations can grow rapidly and reduce crop yields substantially, says Kells.

After fighting the weed for years, Vanderhyde says he's glad to have found a solution.

"We had used atrazine and oil or Basagran[®] in the past, but nothing worked very well," he says. "The corn was knee-high or better when we sprayed the Permit, and it was extremely safe to the corn. I like its ease of handling with water-soluble packaging, too." ■

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The Start of Something Big.

Practice safety to reduce manure pit hazards

Spring is the time of year when many farmstead livestock waste pits are emptied, and a note of caution is warranted, says a Michigan State University agricultural safety specialist.

Howard J. Doss says that gases, commonly found in manure pits, including hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, carbon dioxide and methane, pose a major risk to humans and livestock.

Manure pit gases are classified as suffocants. They either deplete or displace oxygen. When sufficiently concentrated in a confined area, such as a manure pit, these gases can kill an unprotected person by suffocation in seconds.

Manure pits are dangerous because the gases tend to hover near the surface of the manure when it is agitated prior to pumping. Moreover, the gases can linger in lethal concentrations in the pit after it is partially or completely emptied.

Manure pits should not be pumped when winds are calm. If possible, time the manure pumping with the advent of a windy, high-pressure weather system, which tends to bring moderate to brisk winds to the area that will help dissipate the gases.

If the pit is near or beneath a livestock structure, make sure that animals and humans are out of and away from the structure and the pit before agitation of the manure is started.

If mechanical ventilation is used in a livestock building that contains a manure pit, make sure backup power is available in case of an electric power failure. Also have a plan for equipment backup if any part of the ventilating system fails.

Do not allow open flame or smoking in the vicinity of the manure pit as it is being agitated and pumped. Methane gas, one of the byproducts of decomposing manure, can be highly explosive under certain conditions.

Do not enter a manure pit, even if there is a mechanical failure. It is best to call the equipment dealer who should have service representatives trained and properly equipped to correct the problem. The equipment should be removed from the pit if repairs are required.

No one should enter a manure pit without wearing a self-contained breathing apparatus and a lifeline and harness with adequate retrieval equipment (hoist, body harness, lifting tripod, lifelines, etc.)

There must be enough people available to make a rescue if something goes wrong. The rescue people should be equipped with a complete self-contained breathing apparatus and trained in rescue procedures.

Farm managers should remember that employees who are not family members are covered by the confined spaces regulations that are part of the Michigan Safety and Health Act. A copy of the regulations is available from the Michigan Department of Labor. ■