

# MICHIGAN FARM NEWS

MICHIGAN'S ONLY STATEWIDE FARM NEWSPAPER

MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU



MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU

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## Weather worries plague Michigan's harvest season



A less-than-desirable cool pattern of weather in August didn't help Michigan's 2.3-million-acre corn crop mature any faster than it needs to before the chill of fall sets in across the state. Once again, Michigan farmers are keeping their fingers crossed that the ravages of frost and excessive rain will stay away until the bulk of the crop is out of the field.

### Milk superpool faces collapse

Early in September, Dean Foods and Quality Dairy notified the remaining participants in the voluntary statewide superpool of milk that they intended to withdraw from the superpool, the mechanism used to pool together the premiums from fluid milk sales.

This announcement has thrown the state's dairy industry back into a long-standing debate over the distribution of fluid milk premiums.

#### How the superpool works

Since its inception, the superpool has been a voluntary tool on behalf of all milk processors to balance the distribution of Class I (fluid milk) premiums, commonly referred to as over-order premiums.

The Federal Milk Marketing Order, through its Basic Formula Price (BFP), sets the minimum price for Class I milk, but through the superpool the state's processors have consistently been able to negotiate a higher price, or premium, above the federal order level for their fluid-milk use.

"It's been roughly 35 cents to 50 cents a hundredweight for nearly every Grade A producer for every hundredweight of milk they sold over the last five years," Larry Hamm, MSU's agricultural economics department chair, explained.

Once that premium has been set for fluid milk, each milk supplier contributes part of the premium to the pool, based upon its Class I utilization and other factors dealing with milk balancing during times of higher supplies.

#### The future of Michigan's superpool

"Suppose the superpool adds a dollar to the order price," explains Hamm. "If everybody's in it, there's no problem. If any number of people withdraw, the first decision they have to make is will they continue to charge the \$1 over-order premium to their customers — the people they sell milk to."

"If milk is \$14 per hundredweight with the pool, when they pull out they can either charge \$14 to their customers or they can charge less," he added. "If they only charge \$13 — the superpool cannot survive because it will give customers who buy and sell milk in the marketplace lower cost milk."

"Michigan created the concept of over-order premium," Hamm continued. "Taking the revenue from that and pooling it in a way that was done, is the same way it's done in the federal order equally across all producers."

According to Hamm, a major challenge is how the new superpool should share the premiums. "Everybody agrees that we should

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### CFTC issues ruling on Toledo delivery points

#### CFTC delivery ruling mixed news for Michigan producers

Michigan farmers received some good news/bad news recently, when the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) rejected portions of a controversial proposal from the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) to alter delivery points from Toledo, to the Illinois River. The Toledo location is commonly used as a delivery point by Michigan farmers who are utilizing commodity futures contracts to sell corn and soybeans.

CFTC rejected the CBOT's request to eliminate the Toledo location entirely, by a 3-2 vote, ruling instead that CBOT must keep the Toledo location for soybeans. CFTC did approve, however, to eliminate Toledo as an approved delivery point for corn, appearing to agree that the U.S. corn market is shifting to the western Corn Belt.

Michigan Farm Bureau Commodity Specialist Bob Boehm says that while the logic used by CFTC is still unclear, there will be another 30-day public comment period to respond to CFTC's recommendations.

"It gives all parties an opportunity to ask the questions that we're going to ask, like 'What's the difference between corn and soybeans?'" Boehm explained. "The CFTC ruling is definitely positive for soybeans. However, at first glance, it would appear to create greater basis risk for corn contracts, meaning that cash settlement prices will be negatively affected."

The CFTC's proposed changes would alter and add to the CBOT proposal in the following ways:

1. For the soybean contract, require that the CBOT retain Toledo, Ohio, and St. Louis, Mo., as delivery points, in addition to Chicago and the north-

ern Illinois River, as the CBOT proposed.

2. For both the soybean and corn contracts, require locational price differentials.
3. For both the corn and soybean futures contracts, require that the contingency plan, which applies if the river traffic on the northern Illinois River is obstructed, be changed and supplemented.
4. For both the corn and soybean futures contracts, eliminate the CBOT-proposed \$40 million net worth requirement for eligibility to become a shipping certificate issuer.

CFTC will hold a hearing on the proposed modifications in Washington, D.C., Oct. 15. Boehm says Farm Bureau will be taking a much closer look at the research data used by both CBOT and the CFTC prior to submitting any comments to CFTC, adding that a final decision is needed quickly so that producers can begin to forward price 1999 crops on the CBOT. "It is getting to be time where we need to have those contracts available," he said.

In a statement released by the CFTC explaining their position on the soybean delivery points, the commission found that the amount of deliverable supplies of soybeans during the critical summer months of July, August and September failed to meet the minimum level necessary to tend to prevent or diminish price manipulation, market congestion, or the abnormal movement of soybeans in interstate commerce.

At least one Michigan congressman, Rep. John Dingell (D-Deerborn), has weighed in on the issue, calling the port of Toledo vital to Michigan corn and soybean growers. "I have serious concerns about the potential for disaster in the corn futures market under the CBOT's plan," he said.

### COVER STORY

#### Poor weather creates immature corn silage handling dilemma

The general consensus around the state is that this year's corn crop is at least two weeks behind, pushing some producers low on corn silage to hit their fields early to avoid higher feed costs. Take note, however, of some things to watch for when gearing up for handling immature corn silage during the fall.

According to a harvest bulletin published by Michigan State University's Mike Allen, a professor in the animal science department, silage from immature corn can be an excellent forage, but certain factors related to harvesting and feeding should be considered.

When getting ready to open up their first field, farmers are reminded that immature corn is considerably wetter than normal, and seepage from the silo will be extensive if harvested too wet, according to Allen. In addition, very wet corn silage may reduce dry matter intake if it is included in the diet at high levels. Moisture content should be lower than 72 percent when stored in bunker silos and lower than 65 percent when stored in upright silos.

Allen added the best way to determine when to harvest is to take a representative sample of each field, not including border rows, and determine the moisture content using a microwave or forced-air drier. Do not decide when to harvest by just looking at the corn; leaves dry quickly and turn brown following a frost and the corn appears to be drier than it really is. Leaves make up less than 15 percent of the entire plant and the plant may still be too wet when the leaves are brown and dry.

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# News in Brief



## From the President

### Hunter access and the superpool — taking responsibility for our future

As producers, we're often confronted with challenges that seem beyond our control — things like weather, foreign policy and shifts in consumer preferences. However, we currently have two crucial issues before us that, depending on our actions, can either be detriments to our industry or a tremendous opportunity.

Each of us has an opportunity to directly influence the outcome by making a conscientious decision to step up to the plate and take responsibility for the actions and the outcomes.

The first issue involves our state's white-tailed deer herd. Delegates to last year's MFB state annual meeting took a stance that basically said, "Enough is enough!" They said our industry could not continue to suffer the crop damage that we were experiencing.

Thanks to a new sense of cooperation between the Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Farm Bureau and the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, we now have what I consider to be positive changes in management of our white-tailed deer herd. Special antlerless seasons, combined with stand-alone antlerless permits, give us, for the first time ever, a chance to significantly reduce the size of the deer herd and, consequently, the amount of crop damage in future years.

Make no mistake about it. The policy passed by delegates at last year's annual meeting was just the push needed to spur action on this issue. Likewise,

we shouldn't forget that there are those who vehemently oppose the measures approved by the Natural Resources Commission and who were very upset over MFB policy.

All interested parties have, thus far, held up their end of the bargain and taken the steps necessary to provide a framework for reducing our state's deer herd. Farmers and landowners are, in essence, on trial during the next several months.

Critics often argue that hunter access is the roadblock to reducing our deer herd. We have an obligation and a responsibility to make sure that we provide hunters with access to our land whenever possible. If you're not able to accommodate every request, then you need to clearly explain why.

Sportsmen also have an obligation to act responsibly and make arrangements for access starting now, not the night before opening day. Landowners should be able to reserve the right to ask would-be hunters to accommodate specific requests such as taking antlerless deer only.

The dairy superpool is the other issue of immediate concern to Michigan agriculture (see front page for details). The current voluntary superpool structure has allowed all dairy producers to share alike in processor premiums for fluid milk products. This issue, if not dealt with professionally and responsibly, threatens to accelerate the loss of dairy producers in this state. We simply cannot — and should not — allow the superpool to be dissolved.

Negotiations over this issue have been ongoing, which is commendable. However, I would hasten to add that all the players in the dairy industry, whether it be producers, cooperatives or processors, need each other to survive. It's my sincere hope that clear heads prevail as we attempt to resolve this issue.

Since the creation of the superpool, Michigan has been viewed as a role model for other states. The superpool has provided all Michigan dairy producers with an additional 40 cents per hundredweight. Last year alone, dairy producers received an additional \$20 million as a direct result of the super pool.

Rest assured that MFB will continue to play an active role in helping to maintain the superpool. I would encourage each of you to become well-informed on the issue and support your leadership in doing the same.

Sincerely,

*Jack Laurie*

Jack Laurie, President  
Michigan Farm Bureau

### MSU professor is FSA's chief of strategic planning

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Administrator Keith Kelly has announced that Eddie A. Moore, professor, Michigan State University, has joined the Administrator's office as the chief of strategic planning.

"As chief, Dr. Moore will help us plot a course to provide the best customer service and program delivery into the next century," Kelly said. "He is extremely well qualified for this role, and we are fortunate to have him on our team."

Before being named to his present position, Moore served in various positions at Michigan State University. Moore has also held a number of teaching positions in the Virginia school system, Pennsylvania State University, and at Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.

Moore was born in Hertford, N.C. and in 1964

graduated from Perquimans County High School, Winfall, North Carolina. In June 1968, he received a bachelor of science degree in dairy manufacturing from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Greensboro; and in August 1971 obtained a master of science degree from Virginia State University in agricultural education. He graduated in August 1974 with a doctor of philosophy degree in agricultural education from Ohio State University.

Moore is a member of many local, state and professional organizations and has been recognized by a number of officials in education, government, and the private sector for outstanding research, leadership, teaching, service and international programming.

Moore can be reached at (202) 720-8048, at (202) 690-3309 or via e-mail at Eddie\_Moore@wdc.fsa.usda.gov

### Scher vows to get tough on ag trade issues

During his confirmation hearing to become special trade ambassador for agriculture, Peter Scher said the United States would "use every tool at its disposal" to ensure other countries live up to their current trade commitments. He also pledged that the United States would not allow other nations to use "dubious science" to block U.S. agricultural exports.

Scher would become the first agricultural trade ambassador in the U.S. trade representative's office.

His hearing appears to be going rather smoothly, according to reports. Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.)

introduced Scher to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and told the panel that Scher's style is "tough as nails. He plays to win, but he's fair. He takes a reasonable position and holds his ground."

Scher discussed such issues as labeling of genetically modified products in Europe, and opening trade with China. He told the panel that the United States expects China to open its market to more agricultural imports before the communist nation's bid to join the World Trade Organization is approved.

### Brazil to review biotech position

Due largely to the expected need to import U.S. soybeans this year, Brazil's Commission for Biological Security will hold a meeting Oct. 2 to review its position on whether to allow entry of genetically modified soybeans.

Ten percent to 20 percent of the U.S. soybeans that are imported are expected to be biotech varieties. Brazil currently does not allow entry of genetically modified soybeans except for

scientific purposes.

The American Soybean Association (ASA) has called on Brazil to end its ban on imports of biotech soybeans. "I expect that they will reconsider their decision at the October meeting once they realize the implications," said Mike Yost of ASA. He noted that biotech soybean varieties, such as Roundup Ready soybeans, have been approved by every regulatory agency in the United States.

### Farm Bureau: NAFTA good for agriculture, but needs some adjustments

The North American Free Trade Agreement has been good for agriculture as a whole, but adjustments are needed to level the playing field for some sectors, the American Farm Bureau Federation told the House Ways and Means Committee in a recent meeting.

Bob Stallman, president of the Texas Farm Bureau and a member of the AFBF board of directors, pointed out that good trade agreements are critical to the agricultural industry and can lead to higher living standards for all nations—but those agreements must be fair.

"The transition to higher living standards has been a bit bumpy as far as NAFTA is con-

cerned," Stallman said. "Our members generally agree that free trade is the ultimate goal, but we believe that fair two-way trade without undue barriers must be the ultimate goal."

President Clinton soon is expected to request fast-track negotiating authority, which allows an administration to negotiate trade agreements and then send them to Congress for an up or down vote without amendments. Farm Bureau, said Stallman, has concerns about the administration's proposal.

Before committing to full support for fast-track authority, Farm Bureau will "take a very careful look to see that President Clinton's request meets the industry's needs," Stallman said.

### Climate Change Treaty clouds outlook for farmers

The proposed United Nations Climate Change Treaty, in its current form, would substantially increase production costs for U.S. farmers and ranchers, put them at a disadvantage with foreign competitors and threaten their future economic viability, according to the nation's largest farm organization.

"Fuel cost increases imposed by the treaty would mean big hardships for family farms like mine," said Bob Stallman, president of the Texas Farm Bureau. Stallman, a Colorado, County, Texas, rice producer, said some experts project a 60-cent-per-gallon hike for gasoline and diesel fuel and a 50 percent increase in electricity costs if the treaty provisions take effect.

As it now stands, the treaty would force developed nations to meet legally binding targets to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. For agriculture, said Stallman, that would mean new regulatory controls, such as new taxes on fuels and fertilizers and limits on the planting, cultivation, harvesting and production of crops and livestock.

The impact would be severe. "Fuel and energy-related inputs such as fertilizer and pesticides account for about one-fourth of farm operation expenses," Stallman noted.

Moreover, the farm leader asserted, the new regulations "may be counter-productive." U.S. farmers, he explained, already "lead the world" in conservation practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. New restrictions will "interfere with these economically efficient and environmentally advanced farm management plans."

Because the proposed treaty would exempt developing nations from the new environmental controls, said Stallman, "farmers will be dealt a double blow overseas." Competitors such as Mexico, China, Chile and Argentina would be exempt. With their lower labor and production costs, he said, they would "be given a major competitive advantage."

"The agreement makes no sense," said Stallman. "It won't help the environment and it will hurt the economy."

Stallman spoke at a Washington news conference, at which representatives from labor, industry and agriculture explained their concerns about the treaty. The agreement will next be discussed at an October U.N. meeting in Germany. A final agreement is scheduled to be reached in Japan in December. The U.S. Senate would then have to ratify the resulting treaty for it to become binding on the United States.

### USDA issues positive trade forecast for 1998

Expanding exports of U.S. grains, meat and horticultural products should help push U.S. agriculture export totals to \$58.5 billion during the 1998 fiscal year, according to an Agriculture Department forecast. The USDA prediction represents an increase of \$2 billion from last year's total. The 1998 export projection would be the highest since a record \$59.8 billion in fiscal 1996. USDA left its fiscal 1997 export forecast unchanged at \$56.5 billion.

Export of oilseeds and products is the only

major category where USDA expects a drop in export value. That is due mainly to record soybean crops in the United States and Brazil, which will likely lead to sharply lower soybean prices, USDA said.

Total volume of U.S. ag exports could reach 161.4 million tons in fiscal 1998, second only to the record of 169.7 million tons in fiscal 1995, according to the report. U.S. agricultural imports during fiscal 1998 are projected at \$38 billion, up 6 percent from a revised 1997 forecast of \$36 billion.

### Poll: Americans want enviro-protection at all costs

A poll conducted by the Republican Party reveals that 60 percent of U.S. adults believe that environmental protection is "so important that requirements and standards cannot be too high, and continuing environmental improvements must be made, regardless of cost."

The 60 percent figure is up 8 percentage points since a similar question was posed to citizens in 1992. The poll was released in conjunc-

tion with the Republican Leadership Conference held in August.

Of the 800 registered voters surveyed, 30 percent said ensuring safe drinking water was their highest priority. Another 20 percent said the assurance of safe disposal of toxic wastes was the most important, followed by cleaning up rivers and lakes (17 percent), reducing air pollution (13 percent), and cleaning up hazardous waste sites (8 percent).

### EU to appeal WTO ruling on hormone-treated beef

The European Union announced on recently that it will appeal a World Trade Organization ruling that outlawed the group's ban on hormone-treated beef. The appeal was filed on Sept. 25.

The EU says that the WTO's ruling "struck at Europe's right to set health standards for its citizens."

"We have the right to set our own level of pro-

tection," said Gerry Kiely, a spokesman for the EU.

The WTO made its ruling after the United States filed a complaint on the EU's ban on growth hormones in cattle. The U.S. successfully argued that the ban was an unfair restriction on trade.

The 15-nation EU has maintained that beef hormones are harmful. It ignores a WTO panel's finding that the ban has no scientific basis.

### "Little Ice Age" could be slowing global warming

Researchers at the University of New Hampshire believe that lingering effects from the "Little Ice Age" may be slowing the reported global warming effects produced by man-made gases. The Little Ice Age is a 500-year global chill that started around the year 1400. The study suggests the chill hasn't ended.

"This could be modifying the temperatures

caused by the greenhouse effect, although we can't be certain of it," said Karl J. Kreutz, of the Climate Change Research Center at the University of New Hampshire.

Another scientist issued the sobering warning that if the Little Ice Age is indeed modifying global warming, warming effects of greenhouse gases may be worse than is now believed.

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# Capitol Corner

## STATE ISSUE

### Legislature takes up Michigan Drain Code

The Michigan Legislature has taken up three separate bills dealing with the Michigan Drain Code. Sen. Joel Gougeon, (R-Bay City) has sponsored S.B. 122; Rep. Mike Green's, (R-Mayville), H.B. 4174 and Rep. Howard Wetters', (D-Kawawlin), H.B. 4337 each amend P.A. 40, of 1956, Michigan's Drain Code.

Here is a breakdown of some of the main issues in the proposals and whether or not Farm Bureau supports them:

#### Due Process and Administration

1) Mandatory election of drain commissioners in all counties.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau does not support this issue.

The current exemption for counties under 12,000, and for Huron County, should remain intact.

2) Consistent petitioning requirements for both inter- and intra-county drains to require five signatures or landowners that represent 25 percent of the land area.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau supports.

It is very important the drain code continues to allow the minority, i.e. agriculture, to have the ability to begin the evaluation of necessity process. Farm Bureau is open to discuss other petitioning options.

3) Ability to recess the board of determination meeting to acquire specific information about the proposed project, i.e. estimate of cost, scope and alternatives. Farm Bureau also supports that if bids for the project exceed the estimate of cost by 20 percent or more, the project must be re-determined by the Board of Determination.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau supports.

This will provide the opportunity for the people living in the drainage district to have an estimate of cost preformed if they want one and are willing to pay for it.

4) At the request of the drainage district, provide the ability for drain commissioners to hold official informational meetings to discuss specifics about the project.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau supports.

Information about drain projects to the people paying for them is important.

5) Authority for the drain commissioner to abandon proposed projects after notice and public hearings if the project is not practical.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau supports.

6) Providing uniform, consistent notice to drainage district and public agencies. Each landowner subject to assessment will receive a first class notice for the public hearing.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau supports.

7) State-owned land is subject to assessment when receiving benefits.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau supports.

#### Maintenance

1) Expanded authority for drain commissioners through the County Board of Commissioners to review land use changes and adopt rules and collect fees for inspection and discharges.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau supports.

Increasing developmental pressure on drainage systems requires larger more sophisticated drainage. Drain commissioners need the ability to ensure residential developments provide the necessary infrastructure in order to not adversely impact upstream or downstream landowners.

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

2) Requires all new and improved drains be inspected every three years and maintained as necessary.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau supports. Maintenance of drains will result in long-term savings for the district.

3) Increasing the maximum maintenance assessment from the current ceiling of \$2,500 per mile to \$5,000 per mile.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau supports.

Increasing this amount means it will not require an expensive petitioning and evaluation process unless the maintenance project will exceed \$5,000 per mile.

4) Access to property shall not be diminished by the construction of a new drain.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau supports.

5) Drain commissioners may enter property outside of the drainage district to remove obstructions from the drain with reasonable notice to the landowner.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau supports.

Farm Bureau will oppose any attempts to require a permit from the DEQ to do this.

6) If a roadway authority requests or orders the drain to be relocated, the cost of relocating shall be the responsibility of the roadway authority.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau supports.

If a legally established drain within the right-of-way of the roadway is required to be moved by the road authority, the road authority should pay for it.

7) Before the construction of a roadway or any bridge that crosses legally established drains, the roadway authority shall receive written approval from the drain commissioner.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau supports.

It is important that before building roads and bridges, the drain commissioner and road authorities are consistent with both current and future drainage, bridge and roadway needs.

#### Environment and Natural Resources

1) Requires an evaluation of natural resource impacts that identifies appropriate practical measures to minimize adverse impacts.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau will support this change. Farm Bureau policy supports reducing adverse impacts on natural resources.

2) Allow for a petition to enhance or improve natural resources which may include additional assessments by the drain commissioner.

3) Clearly defines and distinguishes between maintenance and improvements.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau supports and considers this to be one of the most important issues. Maintenance of drains must continue to be a simple process in order to solve problems quickly and economically. Improvements to drains must only include clear expansions of drains.

4) Establishment of a comprehensive watershed management program.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau supports the concept of watershed management. However, the current Chapter 22 amendments pose many complicated questions and challenges especially with funding. Farm Bureau recommends Chapter 22 be dropped and taken up as a separate issue following passage of the other drain code amendments. One option may be to establish a watershed management program through the conservation districts.

These Farm Bureau positions may not include positions of all issues within the current bills.

**MFB contact:** Scott Everett, ext. 2046

### Be wary of potential for gas can explosion

Filling a metal gasoline can while the can is sitting on the plastic bed liner of a pickup truck could start a serious fire.

Howard J. Doss, Michigan State University Extension safety leader, says a fire potential is created by a buildup of static electricity.

"When a metal gasoline can is placed on the ground, away from the vehicle, any static electricity that results from the gasoline flowing into the can from the hose nozzle will be immediately absorbed by the ground," Doss says. "Apparently, the insulating effect of the plastic bed liner surface prevents the static charge generated by the gasoline flowing into the can from grounding."

As the static charge builds, it can create a spark between the gasoline can and the fuel nozzle. When the spark occurs in the flammable range in

the gasoline vapor space near the open mouth of the gasoline can, a fire erupts, Doss explains.

To minimize the potential for a fire, Doss recommends the following:

- Use only an approved gasoline container.
- Do not fill any gasoline container while it is inside any vehicle, in a vehicle trunk, in a pickup bed or on any surface other than the ground.
- Remove the approved container from the vehicle and place it on the ground a safe distance away from the vehicle, other customers and traffic.
- Keep the nozzle in contact with the gasoline can during filling.
- Never use the gasoline pump nozzle latch-open device to fill a portable gasoline container.

Doss says the alert is from Chevron Oil Company, which reports several fires at service stations

### USDA changes poultry plan, includes amendments

The Agriculture Department announced that it has changed the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) and its related provisions to include new program classifications. The amendments include new modified testing procedures for program participants.

One of the changes establishes a "U.S. Salmonella Monitored" program for primary meat-type chicken breeding flocks. The program's goal is to decrease the occurrence of salmonella in hatching eggs and chicks through a sanitation program at

breeder farms and hatcheries. It is hoped the program will increase the marketability of those products both domestically and as exports.

Overall, the NPIP identifies states, flocks, hatcheries and dealers that meet certain disease-control standards specified in the NPIP's various programs. As a result, customers can buy baby chicks, poults and hatching eggs that have tested clean of certain diseases or that have been produced under disease-prevention conditions.

### An improved forage grass for cows

Birdsfoot trefoil could be a big hit with farmers and livestock alike. Unlike alfalfa, this forage puts up with less-than-perfect soils. Also, it tolerates heavy grazing, it's nutritious and cattle apparently find it tasty. The bad news: Birdsfoot trefoil is highly susceptible to root diseases.

Now scientists with USDA's Agricultural Research Service have developed the first commercial variety of birdsfoot trefoil that resists root diseases. ARS and the University of Missouri released the new variety, called Steadfast, in 1995.

The secret behind Steadfast's sturdiness is a wild birdsfoot trefoil found by ARS scientists in Morocco in the late 1980s. Steadfast has borrowed

an important trait from the Moroccan trefoil: the ability to produce rhizomes, runners that enable the plant to spread to new sites. Rhizomes grow below the soil and can root to make new plants. Even if parts of the original mother plant succumb to disease, new plantlets that develop from rhizomes allow the plant to live and spread.

This new tool for survival should help the yellow-flowered Steadfast win fans in the U.S. farming community, which has been wary of birdsfoot trefoil in the past because of its disease susceptibility. Another plus for the new variety: It won't cause bloating, the formation of excess gas in the grazing animal's stomach.

### Food safety is major concern of food shoppers

When it comes to buying food, avoiding food-borne disease is as important as taste to both men and women. That's one finding of USDA's latest nationwide food consumption survey, called "What We Eat In America."

In fact, 88 percent of the women questioned during the first two years of the survey rated food safety as "very important"—slightly higher than the 86 percent who gave taste a similar rating. Food safety captured a "very important" vote from 79 percent of the men questioned; taste was very important to 78 percent.

Facts about a food's nutritional quality were less important, however. More than half of men and 40 percent of women rarely or never use label information about a serving size or statements describing how foods and health problems are related.

Nearly 4,000 men and women answered these and other questions about their attitudes

toward and knowledge of dietary guidance and health. They were among the more than 10,000 who participated in the latest food consumption survey (1994-96) during its first two years. Other findings include:

- On any given day, more than 90 percent of children ages 1 to 11 eat breakfast. This meal contributes only about one-fifth of the calories children eat daily. But it provides higher percentages of many vitamins and minerals that are used to fortify ready-to-eat cereals.
- America's teens drink nearly twice as much soft drinks as milk. Adolescent girls drink less than 8 ounces of milk daily on average; adolescent boys drink about 10 ounces.
- Men and women eat less than one ounce of dark green and deep yellow vegetables daily. That averages out to about two cooked broccoli florets or two raw baby carrots.



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 27 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
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
WION	Ionia	1430	6:45 am	12:30-1:00 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
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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# Fall provides best opportunity to control perennial weed problems

Perennial weeds have become a continuing problem for Michigan farmers as reduced tillage or no-till practices have been put into use.

"Probably the best opportunity for dealing with most of our common perennial broadleaf weeds using non-selective herbicides is following wheat harvest," says Jim Kells, Michigan State University Extension agronomist. "This allows application of herbicides to the weeds at the time of year they are most susceptible."

Kells says the ideal growth stage to control perennial weeds is the flower bud or full flower stage.

"Once that stage of growth is reached, they can be treated anytime from then until just prior to a frost. Perennial weed treatment will not be effective following a plant-damaging frost," Kells says. "That means that most of the applications will be made in September or perhaps early October."

For maximum effectiveness, the weeds should be at the proper growth stage; be green, healthy and



actively growing; and not be under moisture stress. Herbicide application should be made several hours ahead of rain, and winds should be calm to nearly calm to reduce potential for herbicide drift. Ideally, the temperature on the day of herbicide application will be around 60°F.

A perennial weed, Kells explains, is any weed that is capable of surviving three or more years and that reproduces vegetatively — that is, from plant parts other than seeds. Such weeds reproduce either by forming rhizomes (underground creeping stems), runners, bulbs, tubers or creeping roots. They may or

may not produce seeds, but they always have the potential to reproduce vegetatively.

Seventeen perennial weed species in Michigan can detract from crop yield: Canada thistle, field and hedge bindweed, common milkweed, hemp dogbane, horse nettle, Jerusalem artichoke, johnsongrass, quackgrass, sow thistle, smooth and clammy groundcherry, swamp smartweed, wild onion and wild garlic, wirestem muhly and yellow nutsedge.

Detailed illustrations of each of the weeds and chemical control recommendations are in IPM

Facts; a series of bulletins numbered E-2244 through E-2257. They are available through the county MSU Extension office or from the MSU Bulletin Office, 10B Agriculture Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824-1039, or call 517-355-0240.

Mechanical control of perennial weeds is possible, though growers run the risk of moving them to new areas of the field or breaking dormancy of underground buds, which could send out new shoot growth.

If growers choose to control by tillage, they should till every two to three weeks when soils are warm and dry so that the plant roots will dry out on the soil surface. Tillage during cool, wet conditions is not advised.

Spot treatment of perennial weeds can be effective when the guidelines in the IPM Facts are followed. Ropewick treatment can be used on some perennial weeds with fair to good results, although permanent elimination is not guaranteed and re-treatment may be required. ■

## Blueberry Integrated Crop Management School scheduled

Blueberry growers, consultants and educators will be interested in an in-depth program to be held at the Kellogg Biological Station near Battle Creek, Mich. Nov. 3-5. This is the first time MSU Extension has offered such a concentrated program on the management of insect and bird pests, diseases, and weeds in blueberries. The program will emphasize in-field identification, scouting and monitoring, and control strategies. Researchers and Extension educators from Michigan and other states will provide over 20 hours of lecture covering the most current information and research on these topics.

The first day will be devoted to insect pest management. Instructors will include Dr. Shridar Polavarapu (blueberry entomologist, Rutgers University), Dr. Duke Elsner (MSU Extension horticulture agent), Dr. Mark Longstroth (MSU district fruit agent), and Dr. Dave Trinka (horticulturist, MBG Marketing). Emphasis will be on blueberry maggots, cranberry and cherry fruitworms, Japanese beetles and aphids. Entomologist John Wise will provide an update on Japanese beetle work being done at the Trevor Nichols Research Farm.

Blueberry disease management will be the topic on day two. The primary instructor will be Dr. Peter Oudemans (blueberry pathologist, Rutgers University). Mark Longstroth and Dave Trinka will contribute additional insights. The biology, identification and control of the most serious fungal and viral diseases of blueberries will be emphasized. The

evening of day three will be devoted to bird management (Dr. Marvin Pritts, horticulture, from Cornell University), sprayer characteristics and calibration (Dr. Gary VanEe, MSU agricultural engineer).

Weed management will be featured on day three. Speakers will include Dr. Rich Bonanno (weed specialist, University of Massachusetts), Dr. Eric Hanson (MSU horticulturist), and Dr. Marvin Pritts. Mark Longstroth and Dave Trinka will share their field observations. The emphasis will be on weed identification and growth habits, cover crops and ground cover management, and cultural and chemical control strategies.

The Kellogg Biological Station is equipped with state-of-the-art lecture facilities, dormitories, and a cafeteria so those students can sleep, eat and study on-site. The registration fee of \$225 covers two nights lodging, all meals, notebook and handouts. Individuals within commuting distance can register for \$175, which includes everything except lodging and breakfasts. The Blueberry ICM School is the week following the MBG Marketing Blueberry Convention and Trade Show (Oct. 29-30) and North American Blueberry Council meeting (Oct. 31). These events will be in Grand Rapids, less than an hour drive from the Kellogg Biological Station. Individuals from outside Michigan may want to consider attending these programs during a single trip. If you would like additional information on the Blueberry ICM School, contact Laurel Raines (616-429-2425),

Mark Longstroth (616-657-7745) or Eric Hanson (517-355-2261).

Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are available to all without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, disability,

age or religion. Handicapper accommodations may be requested by calling Eric Hanson at 517-355-2261 at least two weeks before event. Requests received less than two weeks before event will be met when possible. ■



KBS will be offering a three-day school November 3-5 on the management of blueberries. Pests, disease, bird and weed management will be featured topics.

## Milk superpool faces collapse

Continued from page 1

have over-order pricing," he added. "No one can agree as to what the rules of the superpool should be.

"If the pool is threatened to the point where it begins to collapse, there will have to be serious discussions as to other alternatives that might be able to deal with the situation. The only alternative is to have the force of the state behind the superpool through legislation to create a state milk marketing order," Hamm confirmed.

According to MFB President Jack Laurie, the

organization supports the Michigan dairy producers' well-being and if the voluntary superpool fails, the only fair way to treat dairy farmers equitably and fairly is through legislation.

"It's a critical time right now with the superpool potentially collapsing and with the current low prices we've seen for milk," added MFB's Livestock and Dairy Department Manager Kevin Kirk. "This program benefits the Michigan dairy farmer to the tune of \$25 million annually. Without the superpool, it's going to create additional stress on dairy farms." ■

## MFRN to broadcast frost update special

Much of Michigan's cropland could be struck by a killing frost causing substantial economic losses for many cash crop producers. Crop maturity lags two to three weeks behind normal.

Because of this, Michigan State University Extension, in cooperation with Michigan Farm Radio Network (MFRN), and the Michigan Farm News will broadcast an hour-long program, Oct. 11, focusing on how to handle frost-damaged immature crops. The broadcast will run 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. on the following AM stations: WAJB, 1490, Adrian; WTKA, 1050, Ann Arbor; WLEW, 1340, Bad Axe; WYKO, 1360, Caro; WPLB, 1380, Greenville; WKHM, 970, Jackson; WOAP, 1080, Owosso; WMLM, 1520, St. Louis; WMIC, 660, Sandusky; WLKM, 1510, Three Rivers; and Hastings, WBCH, 1220, Grand Haven; WGHN, 1370 and 92.1 FM will tape-delay the broadcast until 10-11 a.m.

The broadcast intends to answer questions growers have about frost-damaged corn, soybeans, dry edible beans, and other grain and forage crops

that may have been adversely affected by frost. The broadcast will originate from the MFRN studios in Lansing.

"The program's purpose is to provide specific answers to growers on harvesting, possibly salvaging and marketing crops that may not have sufficiently matured at the time of a killing frost," says Pat Driscoll, MFRN farm news director.

Driscoll says growers can call (517) 627-5526 any time during the broadcast with questions. Questions can be faxed to MFRN at (517) 627-5753. MSU Extension experts will be featured who can answer questions on harvesting, drying, storing and selling immature grains, feeding immature forages to livestock and other options that may be open for handling crops.

Jim Kells, MSU Extension agronomist and one of the broadcast organizers, says MSU Extension specialists will have the most current information available on handling frost-damaged immature crops. ■

## Weather worries plague Michigan's harvest season

Continued from page 1

### Silage additives

Immature corn should ensile well if harvested at the appropriate moisture content. Inoculants shouldn't be necessary if the corn is harvested during warm weather, but should be considered for corn forage harvested during cool weather late in the season. If the daily high temperature is lower than 55 to 60°F for several days prior to harvest, inoculants should be considered because the naturally occurring microbes that are desirable may be low in number, Allen added.

### Length of cut

Chopping coarsely will increase the effectiveness of fiber and stimulate chewing and salivary buffer flow into the rumen. Immature corn forage can be chopped more coarsely than mature corn for silage because the ears are much less developed and kernels, if present, are soft and do not need to be ruptured during harvest to be digested. Cob disks will also be less of a problem with immature ears.

### Feeding value

The feeding value of silage from immature corn depends partly on the degree of maturity at harvest. In general it will have higher fiber, slightly higher protein and slightly lower energy content than normal corn silage. The fiber content may exceed 55 percent net digestible fiber for very immature corn silage or for wet corn silage that has had extensive seepage. Digestibility might be 10 to 15 percent lower for very immature corn silage because of the higher fiber content. Diets based on these forages must be

adjusted with higher concentrate levels.

Silage from corn that is only slightly immature may have fiber levels that are close to normal even though the grain content may be considerably lower. This is because grain filling occurs by translocating sugars from the stover and the total sugar plus starch content of the plant may change little during grain filling.

Slightly immature corn silage has similar or even higher digestibility than mature corn silage. This is because digestibility of starch and fiber decreases as the corn plant matures. Although the grain content increases, the grain becomes harder and more kernels pass through the cow undigested. The non-structural carbohydrates of immature corn are highly digestible sugars and starch. The digestibility of fiber decreases as the corn plant matures giving an advantage to immature silage. Although silage from immature corn may require more grain in the diet than normal, if it is harvested at the appropriate moisture content, it might improve milk production because of higher starch and fiber digestibility. ■

- Frost will not adversely affect the quality of corn silage.
- Harvest corn for silage when it reaches 30 percent dry matter; the dry matter range for corn silage is 30 to 45 percent.
- Don't harvest silage below 30 percent dry matter just because it was frosted. Wet silage undergoes extensive fermentation and yields poor-quality and unpalatable silage.

# Survey reveals: Farmland preservation a serious concern for Michigan public

Could the state Legislature be headed in the wrong direction in regards to land-use planning? If the results of a recent survey on the issue are any indication, the answer is an absolute yes.

The survey, conducted by Public Sector Consultants (PSC), a Lansing-based public policy research firm, showed that of the 800 citizens surveyed, 69 percent are concerned about urban sprawl. Fifty percent ranked the loss of farmland as very serious.

"Obviously people are very concerned about water pollution, air pollution and they're also concerned about preserving Michigan's farmland, which is a significant thing when you think about the legislative issues and the public policies that have been debated and voted on recently," said Michigan Farm Bureau Legislative Counsel Scott Everett, referring to recent legislative action on revisions to the state's Subdivision Control Act.

Other highlights from the survey include:

- Seventy percent say it's very important to preserve farmland and maintain agricultural lands.

- Seventy-six percent support restricting development to preserve wetlands and 80 percent support restricting development to protect farmland.
- Seventy-three percent believe conserving open space and protecting natural and scenic resources is a very important goal for land-use planning in Michigan.
- Fifty-eight percent of those surveyed said more land-use planning is needed; only 8 percent think less is needed.
- Less than 50 percent believe that current land-use planning efforts have been successful in encouraging the development and redevelopment of Michigan cities.

Although survey respondents expressed concern over the preservation of farmland, 49 percent also expressed their preference to live on a "large, rural lot." According to Bill Rustem, PSC's senior vice president, that conflict of values needs to be resolved.

"You can't protect agriculture, you can't

protect forestry, you can't protect wildlife habitat and still have everybody living on large, rural lots — it just isn't going to work," Rustem said. "There's a disconnect between what people believe is good public policy and what they are interested in doing in their own personal lives, and that's got to change. People need to understand that there is a personal responsibility that needs to be taken in terms of protecting those industries and that open space here in Michigan."

Calling the state's Legislature out of touch with the wishes of citizens on land-use planning, Rustem says the survey should send a strong message to Lansing lawmakers.

"The people of Michigan, on the basis of this survey, clearly are concerned about the direction that we're heading," Rustem said. "It's unfortunate that the Legislature hasn't been willing to step up to the plate and really begin to address this big problem."

"People in local communities see what's

happening in their communities every day and know that there's something wrong as we spread out. The Legislature doesn't see that. They're hearing from other interests who want to keep this movement going out and away, because there's economic benefit to certain interests in doing that."

Although the survey did not ask for specific recommendations on how best to preserve farmland, Michigan Farm Bureau President Jack Laurie says the results show there would be widespread public support for purchase of development rights (PDR) programs.

"The general public is interested in preserving farmland and preventing urban sprawl," Laurie said. "We now need to take what we've got and look at opportunities to preserve farmland. We have some real opportunities with the PDR program, which offers us a chance to at least have a process in place that will allow us to keep farmland in production agriculture and address the issue of urban sprawl." ■

# Japanese bean producers eye Michigan as a source for their food grade soybeans

Japanese bean purchasers and industry representatives visited Michigan early in September in search of reliable sources of high-quality, food-grade soybeans for export to Japan. They represented soybean crushers; soy protein makers; soymilk makers; margarine, shortening and mayonnaise makers; soybean wholesalers; Japan Oilstuff Inspectors Corp. and the Tokyo Grain Exchange.

These guests of the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee had the opportunity to hear presentations from Agri Sales Inc., Michigan Agricultural Commodities, B&W Coop., American Soy Products, BHR Growers, Pro Seed and The Andersons, as well as Dr. Brian Diers, soybean breeder/researcher at Michigan State University.

"Our real goal was to have them leave knowing that Michigan could fulfill any of their edible soybean needs," explains Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee Executive Director Keith Reinholt. "Since then we have sent a Japanese-translated packet listing producers and organizations in Michigan that export edible soybeans."

The discussion concerned the need to obtain soybeans with higher protein and carbohydrate content for processing into products for distribution to and consumption by the consumer. They expressed concern over obtaining edible soybeans that are not Roundup Ready or genetically modified (GMO), as the Japanese consumer will not purchase edible soybean products made from this soybean source.

Mr. Kazuo Koizumi, of the Japan-based Food-



Dr. Brian Diers, MSU soybean researcher, discusses edible soybean production with Japanese buyers and traders.

stuff Newspaper Co., told a breakfast audience at Michigan State University's Kellogg Center that in 1996, Japan imported 143,286,000 bushels of soybeans from the United States and with decreasing domestic production compiled with decreasing Chinese imports, anticipates the need to import more American-variety soybeans in the future.

"We are pleased to be part of hosting the group around Michigan to demonstrate our ability to produce the beans they need," adds MFB's Manager of the Field Crops Department Bob Boehm. "They are very interested in the Indiana, Ohio and Michigan region for soybeans because of their higher protein content."

Viewing genetically enhanced soybeans also was

an important aspect of the Japanese visit. "At the MSU research farm, they saw absolutely no difference when looking at Roundup Ready soybeans and they were very pleased that MSU was not doing any GMO on edible dry beans. There's a stigma there relative to human consumption on soybeans and this tour went a long way to dispell that."

"With this group we were looking specifically at soybeans for the edible market," adds Reinholt. "Hopefully, private enterprise will take over from here."

Due to the precise nature of raising edible beans Reinholt cautions that "if a farmer wants to get into growing edible soybeans he should contact a processor in their area, because the edible soybeans have to be harvested, cleaned, bagged and containerized in an identity-preserved process that one must go through beginning with the seed that the end-user wants."

"If in fact the grower wants to do something on his own, he has the capability now to contact those people and find out the seeds that they want. They should get with the export division of the Michigan Department of Agriculture," he adds.

The Japanese soy food makers are looking for high quality soybeans and are ready to pay premium prices to cover the lower yields by some varieties.

"Our guests expressed sincere appreciation to the U.S. soybean growers and to the American Soybean Association for the opportunity to visit Michigan. As a result of this visit, we all are looking forward to increasing the business opportunities between Japanese soybean users and Michigan soybean growers," Reinholt concluded. ■

## Chinese soybeans to deepen U.S. gene pool

Improved resistance against three diseases of U.S. soybeans has now been found in soybean plants from China, the crop's ancestral home.

U.S. soybeans have been bred to enhance yields. But inbreeding can make genetic material progressively less diverse. Eventually, yields hit a plateau. New diseases — and new strains of old ones — make current varieties vulnerable. But in recent screening trials, scientists with USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) found improved resistance to Sudden Death Syndrome, white mold and brown stem rot. Eventually, U.S. growers could get new, higher-yielding commercial varieties thanks to improved disease resistance and other important traits.

The new discoveries emerged from an unprecedented germplasm exchange with China that began in 1992 under a cooperative agreement with the Chinese government. The germplasm includes dozens of modern cultivars and more than 2,000 primitive strains. It greatly expands genetic sources from which researchers with ARS, universities and private companies can tap valuable traits for im-

proving yields and disease resistance.

The Chinese lines have joined the U.S. Soybean Germplasm Collection maintained by ARS in Urbana, Ill. They constitute the collection's largest acquisition of Chinese germplasm in 60 years and come from a broader geographical area than previous additions. The exchange is supported by a consortium of ARS, Illinois and Iowa soybean growers' associations, University of Illinois and Iowa State University.

Meanwhile, public- and private-sector researchers are cooperating to compare 60 modern Chinese varieties with contemporary U.S. varieties for productivity and genetic differences at the DNA level. This research will allow scientists to select high-yielding, genetically diverse parents from both countries, so U.S. farmers can achieve long-term yield gains. The collaborators include land-grant universities in Arkansas, Georgia, Maryland and Minnesota; ARS laboratories in Urbana, Ill.; Beltsville, Md.; and Raleigh, N.C.; Pioneer Hi-Bred International; and Asgrow Seed Company. ■

## Ford pleased with alternative-fuel vehicles

The Ford Motor Company said in mid-September that it is starting to make "real progress" in sales of vehicles that use alternative fuels. Ford, the nations' leader in sales of such vehicles, said sales this year rose 9 percent over 1996 results.

Ford's success has prompted other car makers

to develop alternative-fuel lines. Chrysler Corp. has announced a major shift to ethanol-powered vehicles in 1998. Ford and Chrysler are stepping up production of "E85" vehicles, which run on a combination of 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent unleaded gasoline. ■

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# Market Outlook

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



## CORN

The biggest question for many Michigan corn producers is, how mature is my corn? It is hard to put together a pricing plan when you don't know what kind of corn you are going to have. As of the writing of this article we had not had a killing frost over large parts of Michigan, but we did know we needed a late frost to get much of the corn to maturity. If you think there is a likelihood that you may be harvesting immature high moisture corn or silage because of a frost before full maturity, be trying to line up buyers now. However, I recognize that is easier said than done.

At this point consider holding on any further pricing of new crop corn. Beside the maturity question, there does not seem to be a lot of downside price risk. And the market, by the spread between futures, is telling us it will pay on-farm storage. If you have on-farm storage consider using it if the corn turns out to be storable. For corn that you do not have room to store on-farm set the basis before harvest. If you have already priced a third to half of your crop for harvest delivery, then consider using a basis contract to stay in the corn market on much of the rest of your corn, which would otherwise have to be stored commercially. If you had priced little corn earlier, then you may have to price some at harvest to avoid downside risks.

The September USDA Crop Production Report showed estimated U.S. corn production very close to the August estimate. And if we have not had a widespread frost over the Corn Belt by now the estimate

## Seasonal Commodity Price Trends

Corn	↔ ↑
Soybeans (explosive)	↑ ↓
Wheat	↔ ↓
Hogs	↔ ↓
Cattle	↔ ?

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

will probably be close to the actual amount harvested. The USDA did make a significant change in the Supply/Demand Balance Sheet Report, shown in Table 1 below, by lowering expected 1997-98 exports by 25 million bushels. The corn export change was due to higher-than-previously-expected exports by China and an increase in the world coarse grain production estimate.

The fundamentals for corn in table 1 would indicate cash corn prices around \$2.65 by March, which would mean March futures around \$2.85. If March futures hit this level be ready to price or have a good reason not to. March futures being below what fundamentals suggests, along with the futures spreads paying on-farm storage, supports my above pricing recommendations. However, each farm has a different ability and willingness to handle risk which must be factored into your individual pricing plans.

## WHEAT

The Sept. 1 USDA Crop Report, released Sept. 12, showed a decrease in spring wheat production compared to the August estimate. The USDA incorporated this change into their supply/demand estimates which are shown below in Table 2. They left estimated use for 1997-98 unchanged from their August estimates. However, they increased the world use estimate which is a positive sign. However, ending stocks in the United States of 28 percent of use is more than adequate.

The futures are saying they will pay 12 cents to store wheat until December and 15 more cents to store until March. For those who already have wheat in on-farm storage this is probably enough to leave it there, if you don't need the room for corn. For those holding basis contracts consider continuing to hold for a rally. My analysis would suggest not paying for any commercial storage of wheat.

## SOYBEANS

The USDA left the September estimate of U.S. soybean production basically the same as the August estimate, and raised the world production estimate only slightly. However, there were changes made on the use side and those changes have been incorporated into Table 3 below. The 1996-97 (Sept. 1-Aug. 31) crush figure was increased 10 million bushels, which lowered ending stocks the same. This of course lowered 1997-98 beginning stocks and therefore total supply. The 1997-98 crush estimate and export estimate were raised 10 and 5 million bushels respectively compared to the August estimate. The bottom line was estimate use went up and supply went down and estimated 97-98 ending stocks ended up 20 million bushels lower.

This put ending stocks at 11 percent of use, which fundamentally suggests an annual average price of \$6.15 or March futures around \$6.40 per bushel.

As of this writing, mid-Michigan new crop prices were about \$6.20 and March futures were around \$6.50. To me this suggests everyone should consider having at least 50 percent of their expected new crop priced now if you haven't been hurt by an early frost.

What to do with the rest of your soybean crop really depends mostly on your risk preferences and to some degree on whether you agree with the USDA supply and use numbers. I think the USDA numbers are close in the sense that there is both up and downside risk due to unforeseen factors that could enter the market. That is why I recommend being at least 50 percent priced with the market at or above what USDA fundamentals would suggest.

However, on the positive side, world demand for the past couple of years has been stronger than we have dared to estimate, and we may be in the same situation now.

Does this mean we should store some of our soybeans for a possible rally? The answer is NO! Does this mean we should sell all of our soybeans and be done with all out pricing? The answer is probably no. When the July futures are only 18 cents above the November futures the market is telling us they will not pay for storing soybeans anywhere. But the market is not telling us whether futures will go up or down. The point is, if you think the markets are going to go up with stronger-

than-expected demand, or for any other reason, deliver your beans and use a basis contract to stay in the market; don't pay storage.

## CATTLE

Steer prices haven't been great the past month, but they have been as good or better than I or most analysts would have suggested given the large feedlot numbers. And if we can fight through October, we should start to see an increase in cash prices, if we keep current.

Choice steer prices should average close to \$70 for the fourth quarter. At this point there does not seem to be good forward pricing opportunities for cattle ready before the end of the year, as October and December futures were trading under \$70.

Numbers and a decent U.S. corn crop will keep feeder prices strong through the fall, and probably for the next couple of years. Feedlots that will need to buy corn should be checking with their neighbors and be ready to buy silage and/or high moisture corn if the weather doesn't cooperate. I realize nobody wants to take advantage of another person's hurt, but being ready to buy and use immature corn could help you, and make the pain less for your neighbor.

The USDA is expecting beef production to be down 2 percent in 1998. This should help steer prices to average in the low \$70s for the year. A seasonal price pattern would then indicate prices may peak in the mid-\$70s in the spring and have a seasonal low in the high \$60s/low \$70s in late July or early August. The futures market is in line with this analysis.

## HOGS

Where is Japan? Nobody seems to know.

Taiwan has not been exporting to Japan for months on end and will not for a while yet, if ever in a big way — and yet Japan is importing less from us now than last year. Granted Japan may have had large stocks when Taiwan left the market, but that should be gone. Japan's economy has not been great, but that regularly would stagnate demand, not cut it. The value of the dollar has made the price higher to Japan, but not to the extent of the decrease in imports. Is it health concerns? There is no concrete evidence of that. Whatever it is, I hope it turns around soon because our pork production is turning around and it would be nice to have the Japanese market to help use a bunch of the increase.

Pork production is expected to be up over 8 percent for 1998, 7 percent for the first quarter. The USDA supply/demand analysis still suggest that 1998 hog prices will average over \$50. And if their domestic and export use numbers hold up, it could happen. But the futures market and myself are not as optimistic and expect prices to average in the \$46-49 range in 1998 and have a low near \$43 next fall. What this says is, if 1998 lean hog futures rally back over \$70 (\$52 live) then you should consider doing some forward pricing.

## DAIRY

Larry G. Hamm

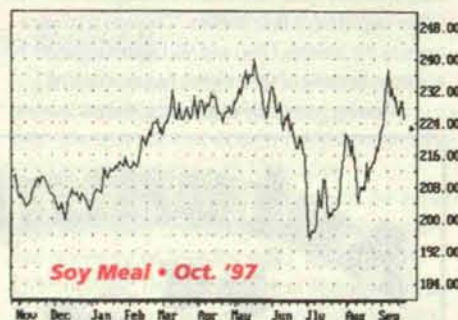
Milk prices are breaking out of their disastrously low summer levels. Significant recovery in the cheese markets are helping to drive the Basic Formula Price (BFP) higher. Dairy product markets are continuing to exhibit moderate strength indicating that the fall price increases have not yet reached their peak.

After four consecutive months of dropping, the BFP for August 1997 increased \$1.21 to \$12.07 (3.5 percent BF/cwt.). This is the first time that the BFP has been above \$12 since March 1997. The increase in the BFP was propelled by significant strength in the wholesale cheese markets.

The BFP is currently being calculated by taking the basic month Minnesota-Wisconsin price and adding the change that occurs in the butter/powder/cheese formula for the period from July to August. For August, the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) average cheese price was \$1.3024; in July, the NASS average cheese survey price was \$1.1767. Therefore, the average wholesale price of cheese increased during the month of August by \$.126 per pound of cheddar cheese in 40-pound block units. The general rule of thumb is that for a \$.01 increase in the cheese price, there is approximately a \$.10 increase in the price of milk used to make cheese. For the August BFP, this formula held very close to true. With the BFP increasing \$1.21 following the \$.126 increase in the wholesale cheese price, the BFP for September and October should show continued strength. For the first two weeks of September, the wholesale cheese price is running approximately \$.09 above their August average survey levels. In addition, in the first two weeks of September, butter markets have shown some additional strength. The combined strength of the cheese and butter markets would suggest that the September BFP is in for another substantial amount increase.

Continued on page 8

## COMMODITY PRICE TRENDS



## COMMODITY SUPPLY/DEMAND BALANCE SHEETS

Table 1 — Corn

(Million acres)	1995-1996	Estimated 1996-1997	Projected 1997-1998
Acres set-aside/diverted	6.2	0.0	0.0
Acres planted	71.2	79.5	80.2
Acres harvested	65.0	73.1	74
Bu./harvested acre	113.5	127.1	125.2
<b>Stocks (million bushels)</b>			
Beginning stocks	1,558	426	891
Production	7,374	9,293	9,250
Imports	16	12	10
<b>Total supply</b>	<b>8,948</b>	<b>9,731</b>	<b>10,219</b>
<b>Use:</b>			
Feed and residual	4,696	5,300	5,550
Food/seed & Ind. uses	1,598	1,690	1,780
<b>Total domestic</b>	<b>6,294</b>	<b>6,990</b>	<b>7,330</b>
Exports	2,228	1,800	2,025
<b>Total use</b>	<b>8,522</b>	<b>8,790</b>	<b>9,355</b>
Ending stocks	426	941	864
Ending stocks, % of use	5.0	10.7	9.2
Regular loan rate	\$1.89	\$1.89	\$1.89
<b>U.S. season average</b>			
Farm price, \$/bu.	\$3.24	\$2.70	\$2.65

Table 2 — Wheat

(Million acres)	1995-1996	Estimated 1996-1997	Projected 1997-1998
Acres set-aside & diverted	5.2	0.0	0.0
Acres planted	69.1	75.6	70.8
Acres harvested	60.9	62.9	63.5
Bu./harvested acre	35.8	36.3	39.0
<b>Stocks (million bushels)</b>			
Beginning stocks	507	376	444
Production	2,182	2,282	2,507
Imports	68	92	95
<b>Total supply</b>	<b>2,757</b>	<b>2,750</b>	<b>3,046</b>
<b>Use:</b>			
Food	883	892	900
Seed	104	103	100
Feed	153	310	275
<b>Total domestic</b>	<b>1,140</b>	<b>1,305</b>	<b>1,275</b>
Exports	1,241	1,001	1,100
<b>Total use</b>	<b>2,381</b>	<b>2,306</b>	<b>2,375</b>
Ending stocks	376	444	671
Ending stocks, % of use	15.8	19.3	28.3
Regular loan rate	\$2.58	\$2.58	\$2.58
<b>U.S. season average</b>			
Farm price, \$/bu.	\$4.55	\$4.30	\$3.45

Table 3 — Soybeans

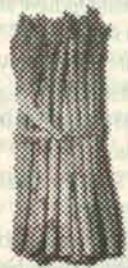
(Million acres)	1995-1996	Estimated 1996-1997	Projected 1997-1998
Acres planted	62.6	64.2	70.9
Acres harvested	61.6	63.4	69.8
Bu./harvested acre	35.3	37.6	39.3
<b>Stocks (million bushels)</b>			
Beginning stocks	335	183	115
Production	2,177	2,383	2,746
Imports	4	10	5
<b>Total supply</b>	<b>2,516</b>	<b>2,576</b>	<b>2,866</b>
<b>Use:</b>			
Crushings	1,370	1,435	1,495
Exports	851	880	950
Seed, feed & residuals	112	146	135
<b>Total use</b>	<b>2,333</b>	<b>2,461</b>	<b>2,580</b>
Ending stocks	183	125	270
Ending stocks, % of use	7.8	4.8	11.1
Regular loan rate	\$4.92	\$4.97	\$5.26
<b>U.S. season average</b>			
Farm price, \$/bu.	\$6.72	\$7.38	\$6.15

Source: USDA and Jim Hilker



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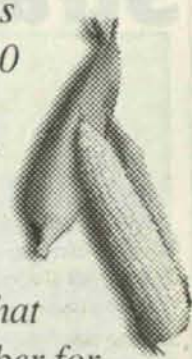
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## Weed Strategies



by Dr. Jim Kells,  
Department of  
Crop and Soil  
Science, Michigan  
State University

### Quackgrass control in fall with Roundup Ultra herbicide

Fall is an excellent time to control quackgrass with Roundup Ultra. Harvested silage corn and wheat fields are ideal sites for fall quackgrass control. Ideal timing is from early September to mid-October. The question often asked is: "How late can I treat quackgrass with Roundup?"

Rather than worry about the calendar, it is best to determine if the field meets the following criteria:

- Quackgrass at least 6" tall, green, actively growing, and not covered with crop residue (corn stover).
- No visible signs of frost injury on quackgrass leaves (quackgrass can tolerate light frost without damage, so a frost does not preclude the use of Roundup Ultra later in the fall).
- Minimum daytime high of 50° F (60° F prefer red).
- No risk of rain for at least two hours. I suggest six hours if temperatures are cool.
- Wind less than 10 mph.

If all five criteria are met, fall Roundup Ultra application should be very effective on quackgrass. Remember that the likelihood of meeting all five criteria diminishes as we get later into the fall.

For best results, Roundup Ultra should be applied at a rate of at least 1 qt/A. Always add ammonium sulfate (AMS) at 17lbs/100 gal to the spray solution. Tank mixing may reduce Roundup Ultra activity on quackgrass (antagonism) and should be avoided if the target weed is quackgrass. If 2,4-D ester is tank mixed with Roundup Ultra, it is suggested that the Roundup Ultra rate be increased (by 1 pt/A) to compensate for possible antagonism. Adding AMS is critical if tankmixing Roundup Ultra with other herbicides. ■

### 16th Annual National Potato Council Seed Seminar

Plans are well underway for the 16th Annual National Potato Council Seed Seminar hosted by the Michigan Potato Industry Commission (MPIC), Dec. 4-6, at the Grand Traverse Resort, Traverse City. "Technology and Innovation" is the title of the seminar. Dennis Iott, chairman of the MPIC Seed Committee and seed seminar planning committee chairman, stated "planning is on schedule and progressing".

Two key speakers are Dr. Robert Horsch, director of technology and general manager, Agracetus Co. (a division of Monsanto) and Ray Wheeler, research plant physiologist Kennedy Space Center, NASA. "Both of these individuals are involved in new trends and technology within the potato industry, Iott said." "NASA's view of hydroponic production of potatoes correlates well with the seed potato industry's interests, and Monsanto's role in genetics

### "Good" bacteria may halt E. coli in its tracks

Researchers at the University of Georgia say they have applied for a patent for a "good bacteria" that when fed to cattle "virtually eliminated" *E. coli* within two to three weeks. The researchers have identified 18 different strains of the so-called beneficial bacteria.

## Imperial Holly buys Michigan Sugar's parent company

Half-billion-dollar deal better offer than previous offer from Flo-Sun

Early in September, Imperial Holly, a major western U.S. sugar refiner, sweetened the purchase deal to Michigan Sugar's parent company Savannah Foods for the entire company through a cash and stock transaction totaling over \$500 million.

In a statement released by Savannah Foods President and Chief Executive Officer William W. Sprague III, Imperial Holly acquired Georgia-based Savannah Foods & Industries, Inc. at a price of \$18.75 in value per share of Savannah Foods common stock, comprised of 70 percent cash and 30 percent Imperial Holly common stock.

"Prior to the merger, Imperial Holly contracted over 235,000 acres of sugar beets with 1,500 growers in nine states and seven growers associations," MFB's Field Crops Manager Bob Boehm states. "This will now create the largest sugar company in the U.S. with production and refining capacity from coast to coast and Wyoming to Texas."

This deal comes on the heels of a purchase offer by Florida-based Flo-Sun Inc. which would have given Savannah stockholders 41.5 percent of a company newly formed by Flo-Sun and Savannah.

Upon termination of the previous merger agreement Savannah Foods must now pay a termination fee equal to \$5 million and reimburse Flo-Sun for expenses up to \$3 million, according to Savannah officials.

"Savannah Foods' initial offer from Flo-Sun was received by shareholders with less than enthusiastic response," explains Boehm. "They viewed it as a low price offer and their competitor Imperial Holly came forward with an offer significantly higher than the original offer."

"We've always been attracted to Savannah," explains Bill Schwer, Imperial Holly's managing director, secretary and general counsel. "Because of the complementary nature of our two companies — them being in the Southeast, the mid-Atlantic. Our company, on the other hand, is primarily a west-of-the-Mississippi entity."

"We're a very small component," explains Dick Leach, executive vice president of the Great Lakes Sugar Beet Growers Association, which represents the 103,000 acres contracted with growers for Mich-

igan Sugar. "They had nine sugar beet refineries in the west until we came along; we've added another four smaller refineries to their base."

Imperial Holly's sugar refining factories include one Houston-based cane refinery, four beet factories in the Rockies, and four beet factories in California.

"The thing I think is important about Michigan," Leach adds, "we are a unique area, we're very efficient and have a low-cost production area and we're located for the Chicago, Detroit and Toledo markets. That makes us important — even though our size isn't there, we have sugar where it's needed."

"What this offers our company — particularly the merged company," Schwer adds, "is the ability to service particularly the national industrial consumers to anyplace in the United States with good transportation rates — and the key when you're shipping a commodity product is having good rates."

### Sugar contracts will be upheld

"There's contracts with growers in place right now that we can't do anything about," Schwer explains. "But we're certainly going to take

a look at those contracts and hopefully, between some beet quality improvement that we're very strong on, hopefully, we can improve both the grower situation, relative to their yield rates, and develop more acreage.

"The only way we're going to do that is to make a better return back to the grower," he adds. "We have to invest in the future — that's what we've done in the Rockies and in California over the last five to seven years."

"It's too early to tell the complete impact Imperial Holly will have on Michigan's sugar infrastructure and their plans for additional investment," Boehm adds. "But their increased offer for Savannah Foods indicates their desire to have an increased presence in the eastern sugar areas."

Savannah Foods is an 80-year-old company and major supplier of grocery and industrial sugars employing approximately 2,000 people. Best known for its Dixie Crystals product line, the Company reported \$1.2 billion in sales for fiscal 1996.

Officials believe the deal will be finalized by the end of this year and do not expect any other offers to come forward. ■



The purchase of Michigan Sugar's parent company, Savannah Foods, by Imperial Holly, forms the largest sugar company in the U.S.

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## Market Outlook

Continued from page 6

Farm level pay prices will continue to suffer the hangover from the disastrously low BFP levels of mid-summer. The full effect of the large jump in the BFP for August will not be fully seen in producer checks until October. Over the last several months, Michigan producer income has substantially benefited from the operation of over-order pricing and the Michigan Superpool. Because Michigan had a full participation Superpool structure, additional revenues were obtained to help blunt the disastrous farm prices in the last several months. Part of the increase in September

pay prices experienced by all Michigan producers are a result of the operation of the Superpool. Recent defections of individual Michigan dairy farms and processors from the statewide Superpool will hurt the future use of the Superpool mechanism to deal with disastrously low prices for all Michigan producers.

In conclusion, milk prices are on the way up. Prices should remain with upward price strength through November. Although this year's milk prices will be substantially lower than last year's, the modest increase this fall will be welcome relief from this summer's below-cost milk price levels. ■



# Dicks named MMPA's Outstanding Young Dairy Cooperators at state conference

**G**ordon and Susan Dick, of McBain, have recently been selected as the 1997 Outstanding Young Dairy Cooperators (OYDC). They represented Michigan Milk Producers Association's (MMPA) District 5 and the Evert Local in the annual OYDC conference held Aug. 13-15. The Dicks were selected earlier this year by fellow dairy farmers in their district to participate in the program.

The Dicks farm in partnership with Gordon's brother, Ron. They milk 150 cows and farm 600 acres on their Missaukee County farm. The Dicks have three children: David, Dale and Mark.

Dave and Tammy Johnson, of Daggett, Menominee County Farm Bureau members were selected as runners-up in the OYDC contest. The Johnsons were selected earlier this year by fellow dairy farmers in their district to participate in the annual conference. They represented MMPA's District 12 and the Menominee-Vacationland Local.

The Johnson farm is a family operation with Dave's father and brother. They milk 120 cows and farm 400 acres on their Menominee County farm. They have three children: Lance, Heidi and Christian.

Selection of OYDC is based on the applicant's farming operations, farm-related and community activities, and demonstrated leadership abilities.

The State OYDC Conference, held at MMPA headquarters in Novi, is designed to provide information about milk marketing activities, cooperatives, milk testing procedures and other current events within the dairy industry. The contest has been held annually over the past 47 years.

"The OYDC program identifies outstanding young leaders in our organization and provides the opportunity for them to gain a greater

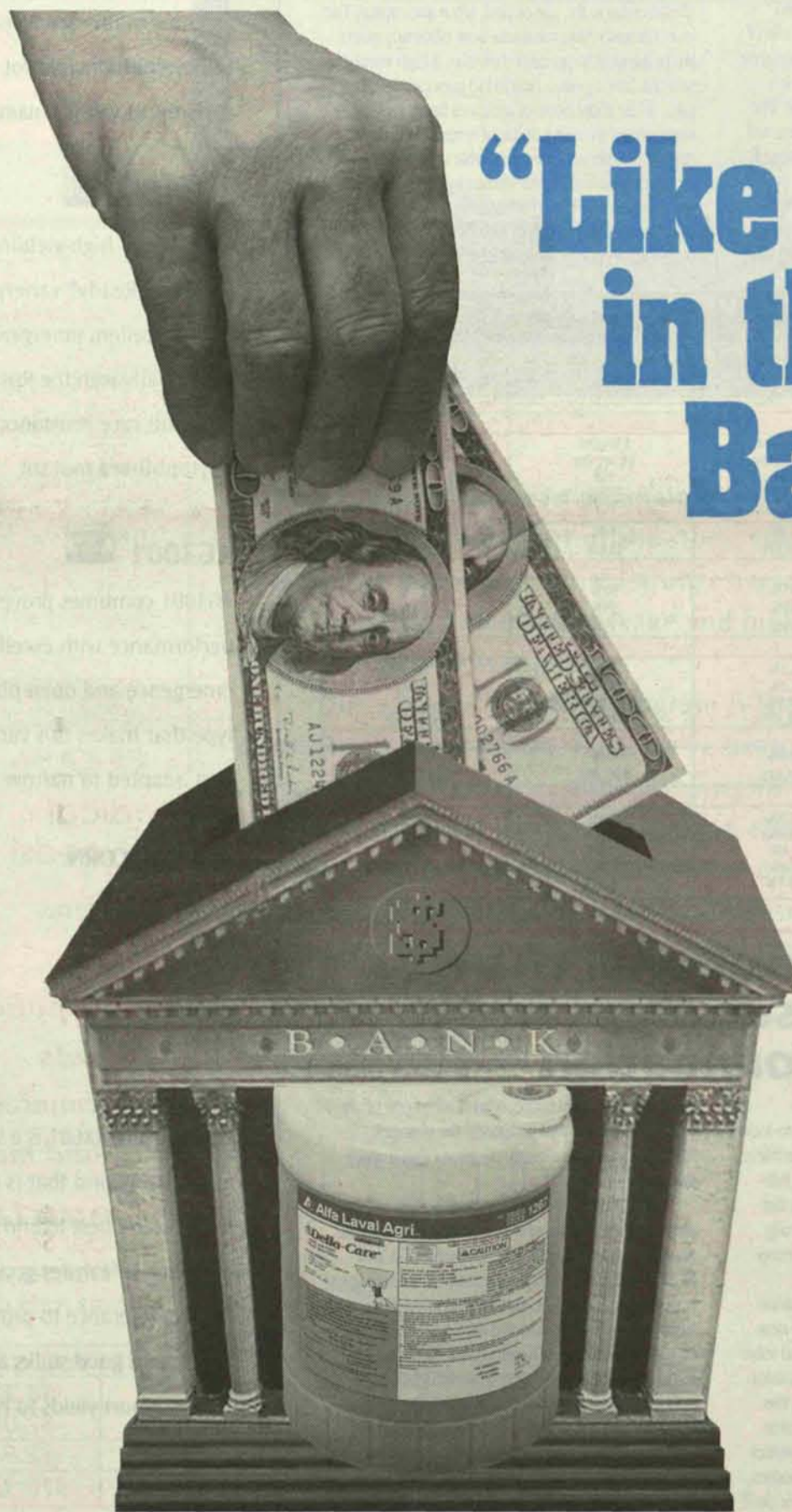
understanding of milk marketing activities and MMPA," said Elwood Kirkpatrick, MMPA president.

All the MMPA district OYDCs will be officially recognized at the 1998 Annual State Delegate Meeting to be held next March.

The Dicks represent MMPA's District 5 which covers Osceola, Mecosta, Montcalm, and Gratiot counties. ■



Missaukee County Farm Bureau members, Susan and Gordon Dick, were recently named MMPA's 1997 Outstanding Young Dairy Cooperators.



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# Business Strategies

## Financial measures vary on Michigan dairy farms

Sherrill B. Nott

Ralph Hepp

Department of Agricultural Economics  
Michigan State University

**F**inancial statement analyses using ratio measurements and trend analysis, assist farm managers to make informed judgments and decisions about the entity's financial condition and results of operations. The financial measures in this article are split into five sections: liquidity, solvency, profitability, repayment capacity and efficiency. For each section, financial measures and ratios provide meaningful relationships between individual values in the financial statements.

This article defines the financial criteria and ratios and provides values for 146 Michigan dairy farms for the 1996 calendar year. The source of the financial data is records analyzed for dairy farmers by the Telfarm record program through Michigan State University Extension. Additional data about these dairy farms, broken into size groups, can be found in Agricultural Economics Staff Paper No. 97-31. This is available from county Extension offices, or from me, or at my home page at <http://www.msu.edu/user/not/>. The data provides managers of dairy farms of comparable size with industry standards to compare the results from their business. Your local Extension dairy agent can arrange for your farm to do an analysis using the same format to insure the comparability of your individual ratios.

The data in Table 1 summarizes the measures for 146 dairy farms and the average for the high and low one-quarter of the operations based on net farm income. In addition to the five financial sections, farm size measures describe the operations. Over 87 percent of the cash sales on these farms came from milk. Another 5 percent came from cull cows, calves and steer sales. Family labor provided about 45 percent of the labor hours for the 146-farm average.

**LIQUIDITY** measures the ability of a business to meet financial obligations as they come due in the ordinary course of business, without disrupting the normal operations of the business. The current ratio indicates the extent current assets cover current liabilities. Working capital is the amount of funds available to purchase inputs and inventory items, or make advance payments on debts. The current ratio on the high income farms was about 2.5 times higher than on the average farm on the last day of 1996. They also had 2.7 times as much working capital. The high income farms were in a strong financial position to finance 1997's operations and capital purchases without having to borrow more money.

Many of the ratios, such as the current ratio, were calculated with values from the average balance sheet at the end of 1996. A rule of thumb is that the current ratio should be 2.0 or higher to be classified as safely liquid. The low income farms ended 1996 with a current ratio of only 1.07 despite being at the

end of a year where the average milk price received was \$14.73 per hundredweight. This ratio explains why some dairy farms are being severely pressured by the lower milk prices currently being received.

The **SOLVENCY** criteria measures the amount of borrowed capital used by a business relative to the amount of owner's equity. Three ratios showing the relationship of debts, assets and equity to each other and measuring the financial position of the business and the creditors' and owners' claims against the assets are given in the table. The average dairy farm had 31 percent debt and 69 percent equity at the end of 1996. This is about average for all farms throughout the United States. The lower-income farms had a noticeably higher debt-to-asset ratio than did the high-income farms. Higher total dollars of interest payments were a factor in classifying the farmers into the low net income category.

**PROFITABILITY** measures the extent to which a business generates a profit from the use of land, labor, capital and management. The rate of return on assets and equity applies all of the residual income to capital after charges are made for family labor and management. The operating profit margin is a ratio of profit before interest charges are made for family labor and management. The operating profit margin is a ratio of profit before interest charges to revenue. The average dairy farm returned 5.3 percent on assets and 4.4 percent on equity. High-profit farms had a rate of return on assets of 12.9 percent during 1996. Low-income farms took losses. Since the high-and-low-profit farms are sorted by net farm income, the other profitability factors show very positive values for high-

profit farms and unfavorable numbers for low-profit dairies. Low-profit farms need to determine the causes of low income and correct those deficiencies.

**REPAYMENT CAPACITY** measures the ability of borrowers to repay debt from income. The term debt coverage ratio is a measure of the ability of the business to cover all short-term debt payments. A number greater than 100 indicates the business generated enough cash to pay all term debt payments. For example, a coverage ratio of 200 shows that the firm generated twice the amount of cash needed to make debt payments. The capital replacement margin shows how much cash is available above the amount needed to pay operating expenses, taxes, family living costs and scheduled debt payments. The high-profit farms were in a strong position to service debt commitments and finance growth from cash flows during 1996. It appears many of the 37 farms in the low income group were unable to make all the short-term debt payments they committed themselves to at the start of 1996. They also had negative capital replacement margins.

**EFFICIENCY** ratios measure the degree of effectiveness in the use of land, labor and capital. The asset turnover ratio measures how efficiently assets are being used to generate revenue. A high number says that less capital is needed to generate a dollar of sales, while a low number indicates farms require more capital to raise a dollar of revenue. In most cases, a business is more profitable if it can generate more revenue from fewer dollars invested in machinery, inventory, land and other assets. The other efficiency ratios are a comparison of expenses, depreciation or interest expense to revenue. ■

**FINANCIAL GUIDELINES MEASURES, 1996**  
Michigan Dairy Farms (Farms sorted by Net Farm Income)

	Average for all Farms	Average for low 25%	Average for high 25%
<b>NUMBER OF FARMS</b>	146	37	37
<b>SIZE</b>			
Cash Farm Sales	\$541,674	\$555,690	\$902,545
Total Farm Assets	\$1,178,674	\$1,341,958	\$1,655,109
No. of Cows	158	169	241
Milk Sold Per Cow	20,221	18,843	22,819
<b>LIQUIDITY</b>			
Current Ratio	1.98	1.07	4.90
Working Capital	\$77,571	\$9,656	\$210,244
<b>SOLVENCY</b>			
Farm Debt to Asset Ratio	31%	41%	21%
Farm Equity to Asset Ratio	69%	59%	79%
Farm Debt to Equity Ratio	45%	71%	26%
<b>PROFITABILITY</b>			
Rate of Return on Farm Assets	5.3%	-1.7%	12.9%
Rate of Return on Farm Equity	4.4%	-7.6%	14.4%
Operating Profit Margin	15.0%	-5.8%	30.2%
Net Farm Income	\$78,315	-\$16,889	\$232,796
<b>REPAYMENT CAPACITY</b>			
Term Debt Coverage Ratio	150%	14%	368%
Capital Replacement Margin	\$18,072	-\$45,393	\$102,757
<b>EFFICIENCY</b>			
Asset Turnover Rate (market)	35.4%	28.7%	42.5%
Operating Expense Ratio	77.1%	87.3%	71.1%
Depreciation Expense Ratio	7.4%	13.9%	4.5%
Interest Expense Ratio	4.8%	7.2%	2.7%
Net Farm Income Ratio	10.7%	-8.5%	21.7%

## Farmers approve major organizational changes for National Corn Growers Association and National Corn Development Foundation

**I**n a move impacting corn growers nationwide, board members from the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) and the National Corn Development Foundation (NCDF) voted in favor of significant changes that combine both organizations to create a new national corn farmer organization. The new association is designed to increase farmers' profitability and influence within the corn industry by enhancing farmer involvement and decision-making at the grass roots level.

Growers at the meeting said they believed that the organizations are moving in the right direction by creating a nimble, fast-acting organization.

"This vote gets the ball rolling in our transition to a new national corn organization," said Wallie Hardie, current president of the existing National Corn Growers Association.

This move follows recommendations from two special study groups comprised of growers appointed by the NCGA and NCDF boards of directors earlier this year. These groups explored ways to improve the structure and resources needed to enhance corn farmers' future profitability and productivity. The new organization will continue to be called the National Corn Growers Association because the name is nationally recognized, but the structure and work of the new organization will differ significantly from the

former NCGA and NCDF.

"This vote affirms growers' willingness to look toward the future and take positive steps to achieve their goals," said Hardie, a corn farmer from Fairmount, N.D. "Accomplishing them requires a fast-acting, flexible organization that can strategically plan and react to the many changes that are transforming agriculture."

Teamwork, representation and participation increases for corn farmers under this unique new association. In order to prioritize, address and solve issues, the new National Corn Growers Association will involve farmers in three working bodies, the Corn Board, the Corn Congress and Corn Action Teams. "For the first time, corn farmers can participate in, and direct, the work of these three bodies, whether farmers are involved in their state checkoff board or their state grower association," said NCDF Chairman Everett Nordine, who served as chairman of one study group.

"There's an abundance of talent among corn farmers, and our new organization will be able to tap into this talent base by allowing corn growers to select and lend expertise to issues that they feel are important to them without working through a burdensome organizational process. Participating farmers' valuable time can be targeted and used more

productively," said Hardie, who chaired one of the two study groups that proposed the changes. "Farmers will work directly on issues that impact their bottom lines."

The three new organizational bodies will be phased in during the next year and will be up and running by Oct. 1, 1998. The former NCGA and NCDF boards will appoint a transition team to assist with the start-up of the new organization. The transition team will report to the NCGA and NCDF Executive Committee in November and the boards of directors in December. The team will clarify and define the processes needed to combine the two organizations. NCGA and NCDF board members will vote in December on recommendations from the transition team.

"The process that we've gone through is a very healthy exercise for both organizations, and exercise leads to increased strength and endurance. All businesses periodically go through the processes of organizational evaluation," said Hardie. "It's necessary to make sure that you're doing the right things to grow in your businesses and the markets that you operate. The members of the boards of the two organizations took an objective look at the recommendations of the study groups and voted for the future." ■



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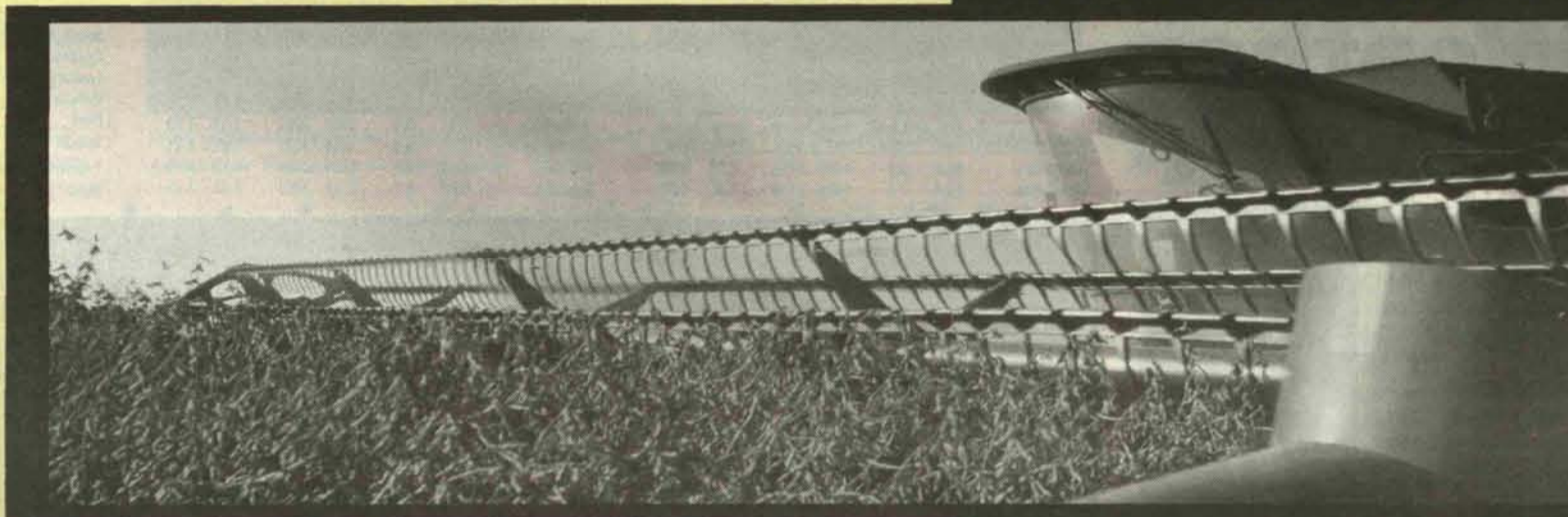
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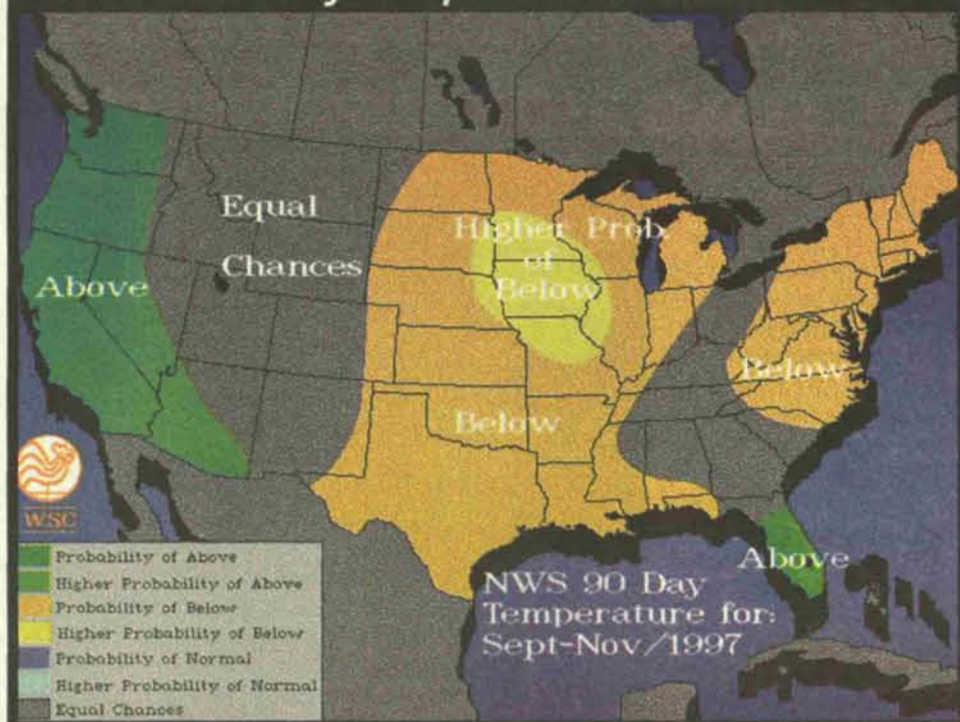
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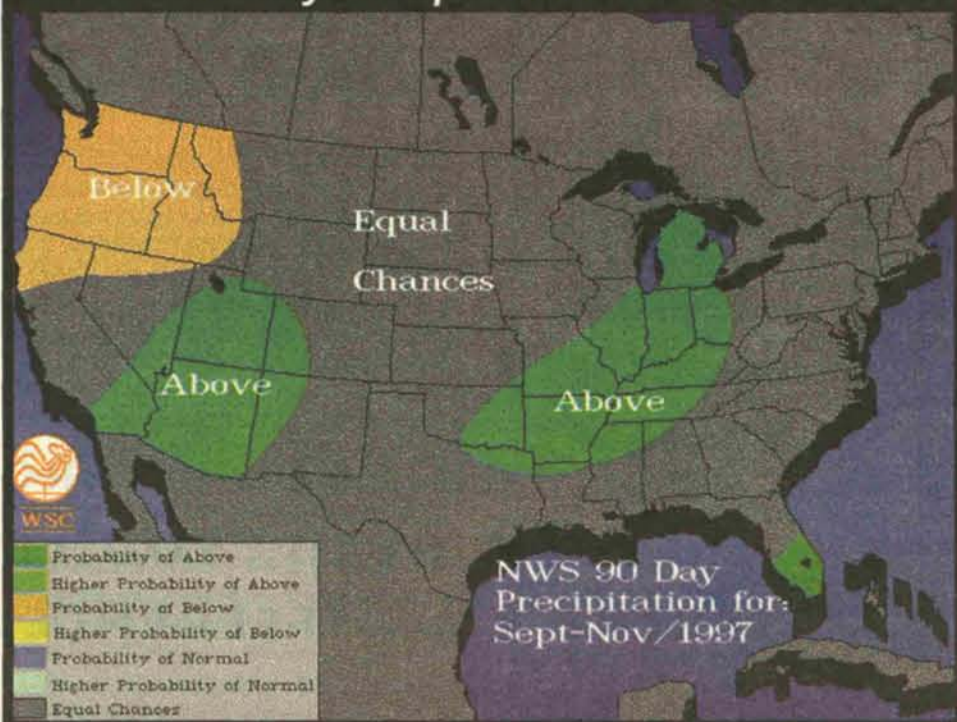


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90-day Temperature Outlook



90-day Precipitation Outlook



# Weather Outlook



## Michigan Weather Summary

8/16/97-9/15/97	Temperature		Growing Degree Days(*)		Precipitation	
	Obs. mean	Dev. from normal	Actual	Normal	Actual	Normal
Houghton	60.3	-0.1	1579	1758	1.24	3.98
Marquette	58.4	-1.3	1489	1758	1.51	3.98

Sault Ste. Marie	60.7	0.1	1483	1537	1.73	3.60
Lake City	59.5	-3.8	1618	1991	2.61	3.40
Pellston	60.6	-0.8	1649	1991	1.72	3.40
Alpena	60.6	-1.9	1648	1925	4.07	3.29
Houghton Lake	60.1	-3.6	1699	1925	2.49	3.29
Muskegon	63.1	-3.6	1967	2201	1.97	3.59
Vestaburg	61.1	-5.5	1904	2277	1.81	3.41
Bad Axe	61.7	-4.9	1829	2306	4.53	2.70
Saginaw	63.3	-3.7	2165	2306	6.01	2.70

Grand Rapids	64.0	-3.3	2148	2548	2.72	3.14
South Bend	65.8	-2.7	2364	2548	3.62	3.14
Coldwater	63.5	-4.8	2153	2486	4.53	3.03
Lansing	62.8	-4.4	1994	2486	2.62	3.03
Detroit	66.2	-2.6	2337	2502	3.50	2.83
Flint	63.1	-3.4	2027	2502	3.68	2.83
Toledo	65.2	-3.5	2310	2502	1.71	2.83

\* Growing degree day accumulations are calculated with the 86/50 "corn" method and are summed beginning April 1, 1997.

by Dr. Jeff Andresen, Agricultural Meteorologist, Dept. of Geography, Michigan State University



By mid-September, seasonal base 50°F growing degree day totals in many areas of the state had fallen to levels not seen since the 1992 growing season, resulting in further phenological delays in crop growth and development, especially for corn. Mean temperatures for the past 30-day period ranged from 1 to 6°F below normal. A persistent upper air troughing pattern across the Great Lakes and New England regions was responsible for much of the cool, cloudy weather of the past several weeks, although by mid-September, the jet stream steering currents showed signs of shifting to a more dynamic, quickly-changing pattern, allowing at least temporary incursions of warmer air to return to much of the region.

New NOAA/Climate Prediction Center outlooks for the upcoming weeks indicate some forecast changes for the next one to two months, with near equal probabilities of below-, near-, and above-normal temperatures forecast for the month of October. For the 90-day October-December period, the outlook now calls for the near equal probability scenario for temperatures across the Lower Peninsula and eastern Upper Peninsula, with increased odds of above-normal temperatures in the western and central Upper Peninsula. The outlook still calls for increased odds of wetter-than-normal conditions, especially for lower Michigan. This set of outlooks is somewhat warmer and drier than previous outlooks, which had called for a large area of cool, wet conditions across much of the Great Lakes region (the outlooks have now generally shifted the forecast area of cool, wet weather to areas west and south of Michigan). In the longer term, El Nino conditions in the equatorial Pacific will likely dominate the winter and early spring period. During El Nino events, the jet stream in the Northern Hemisphere frequently splits into two separate branches, a northern or polar branch, and a southern or sub-tropical branch. The subtropical branch during El Nino events is commonly more energetic than normal, which in turn results in an increased frequency of storms and precipitation across the southern United States. In Michigan, the trend is reversed, with milder, drier, and less stormy than normal weather expected.

### Did they really do those animals a favor?

Animal rights activists celebrated a "victory" recently after successfully releasing 1,100 minks and 200 blue foxes from fur farms near Vassa, Finland. The anti-fur activists were jubilant following their "coup."

Their victory will probably be short-lived, however, as most of the animals are expected to die in the wild in a very short time.

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# Michigan leading states on cider safety practices

**MDA director says FDA program to improve safety of fresh juices in line with Michigan's initiatives**

New initiatives proposed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to minimize hazards associated with fresh juice products follow actions already being taken by the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) and Michigan's apple cider industry, according to MDA Director Dan Wyant.

The FDA plan includes requiring juice and cider manufacturers to implement complex plans for making sure their processes are clean. Known as the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) program, it eliminates risks along a product's route from the farm field to the grocery store. The FDA also indicates plans to ask producers of unpasteurized juices to label those products, informing consumers of the risk of illness associated with those products, and to initiate educational programs aimed at consumers and the juice industry.

"We've been working with Michigan's apple industry since last fall to develop a program aimed at enhancing the safety of apple cider produced in Michigan," said Wyant. "It includes 'Good Management Practices' (GMPs), a pilot HACCP program, producer training, and educational outreach."

The GMPs were developed by the Michigan Apple Cider Advisory Group, made up of represen-

tatives from the apple industry, Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan State University, Michigan Farm Bureau and the FDA. They were distributed to all Michigan apple cider producers and took effect in June 1997. The GMPs were the result of more than seven months of cooperative

effort by the group, which analyzed cider making practices and developed a standard set of requirements and guidelines for Michigan cider producers.

"Michigan has had no reported cases of people getting sick from drinking apple cider," said Wyant. These GMPs are a common-sense

approach to continued prevention, and push Michigan to 'front and center' as a national leader in the production of safe, wholesome and great tasting apple cider."

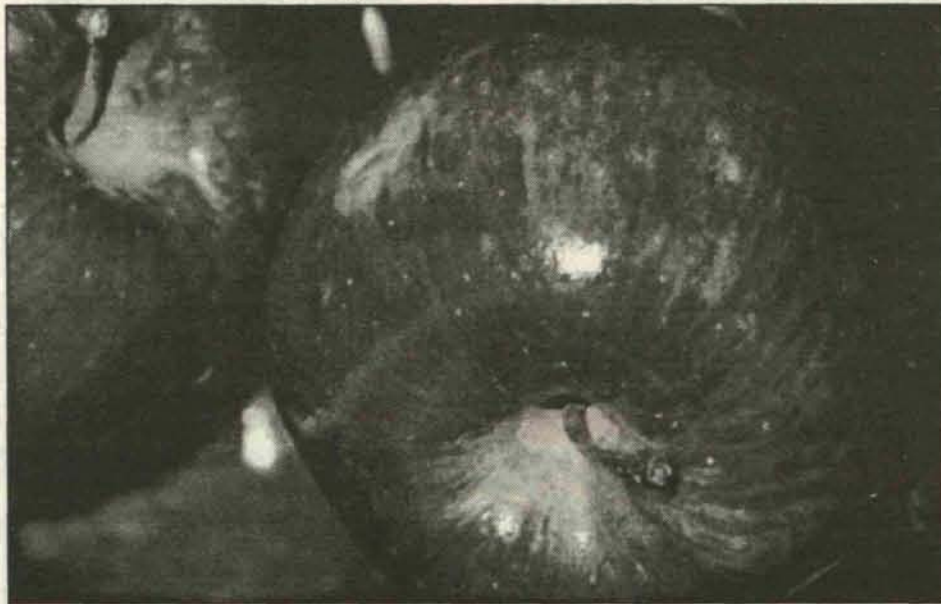
MDA food inspectors are working closely with apple cider producers to implement the GMPs for this fall's pressing season.

A pilot HACCP program will be launched this fall that will help processors identify steps that can be taken to assure reductions in microbial risk. The whole industry will benefit from model HACCP plans developed during the pilot stage.

In addition, the Michigan Apple Cider Advisory Group will continue to work in the areas of research and technology; and education of cider mill operators, regulatory officials and consumers. These educational efforts will be enhanced by the work of the Michigan Food Safety Alliance, which was formed by Gov. John Engler, U.S. Sen. Spencer Abraham and MDA Director Dan Wyant this summer to coordinate food safety information efforts by industry, academia, government and consumer groups.

Michigan has approximately 200 apple cider producers and ranks among the nation's top apple cider-producing states.

For more information about Michigan's apple cider initiative or to request a copy of the Michigan apple cider GMPs, contact MDA's food technologist, Jerry Wojtala, at 517-373-1060. ■



New Good Management Practices for apple cider in Michigan are part of MDA's effort to guarantee the safety of the product.

## Which will be planted, red or white wheat? It's almost a toss-up

About a decade ago, nearly all of Michigan's winter wheat acreage was planted to white wheat, much to the delight of the state's milling industry, partly because the white wheat bran they sell, a flour milling by-product, is used in breakfast cereals.

In the past few years, however, white wheat has been gradually supplanted by red wheat varieties. The conjecture is that growers believe that red wheat tends to resist disease and sprouting better than white wheat.

Randall Judd, Michigan Crop Improvement Association (MCIA) manager, says that white wheat used to account for about 80 percent of MCIA seed wheat sales, but that, as of about two years ago, the ratio has been running 50-50.

"So far this season, white wheat seed sales have been running at about 55 percent, and that may be in response to the dime premium being offered for white wheat," Judd says.

Larry Copeland, Michigan State University Extension agronomist, says that red wheat varieties do, in fact, show more resistance to sprouting than white wheat varieties.

"They tolerate more successive days of wet weather before sprouting occurs and, consequently, sprouting is infrequently a significant problem," he says. "However, red wheats are not resistant to sprouting and will eventually be affected."

Possibly another reason for red wheat's popularity among growers is its availability.

Copeland says that most eastern U.S. private and public operations that develop wheat have opted for red varieties. MSU is one of only two breeding institutions that have focused on white wheat.

"The preponderance of red wheat varieties resulted in increased availability and visibility for soft red wheat. That, combined with their excellence performance, means the soft red varieties have emerged in areas of Michigan that were histor-

ically dominated by white wheat," Copeland relates.

Of the 72 wheat varieties entered in the 1996-97 Michigan State University field trials in nine counties, 48 varieties were red and 24 white. Of the 12 wheat varieties — six red, six white — tested in MSU trials the past four years, three red wheat varieties — Pioneer 2552, Freedom and Wakefield — produced the highest average yield in four-year trials with 72.4, 69.9 and 70.4 bushels per acre, respectively.

Other varieties and their average per-acre yield for the four years are Ramrod (white, 68.1), Mendon (red, 67.1), Cardinal (red, 66.7), Bavaria (white, 65.9), Pioneer 2737 (white, 65.8), Lowell (white, 66.1), RS 927 (red, 64.7), Chelsea (white, 62.3) and Harus (white, 63.3).

Copeland says a merit of white wheat is the large industry that has developed to contribute to potential farm income value.

"The milling industry has provided an average

of nearly \$1 million per year in Michigan farm gate receipts and a value-added contribution of nearly \$1.5 billion each year in large part because of soft white wheat," Copeland says.

Most of the white wheat varieties were developed at MSU and are intended for Michigan growing conditions.

"This has been considered an advantage over soft red wheat varieties, which were largely developed in other areas," Copeland says. "It has been thought that white wheat varieties are more winter hardy for this reason."

Except for the value of white wheat bran in breakfast food, both classes of wheat have similar value for flour in cake, cookie and pastry baking, and similar management requirements and yield potential, he says.

"However, it is very important to the total wheat industry that Michigan stay competitive in wheat and understand that the key to competitiveness includes the production of white wheat," Copeland says. ■

## Governor appoints directors to Michigan Beef Industry Commission

Gov. Engler has announced three appointments to the Michigan Beef Industry Commission. They are Velmar Green, Walt Stafford and Clarence Wilbur. Members are appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate.

The Michigan Beef Industry Commission administers the beef checkoff program, which is designed to improve profitability by strengthening beef's position in the marketplace and by expanding consumer demand for beef. The beef checkoff funds programs in the areas of promotion, consumer information, industry information, foreign marketing and research on both the state and/or national level.

Velmar Green, of Elsie, has been reappointed to the commission to represent dairy producers. Green, a dairy farmer and cattleman, is a past member of the national Beef Promotion and

Research Board. He is treasurer of Green Meadow Farms, Inc., treasurer of the Michigan Milk Producers Association, treasurer of the Michigan Beef Industry Commission, and a member of Michigan Farm Bureau and the Michigan Cattleman's Association.

Walt Stafford, of Richland, has been an active member of the beef industry for at least 30 years. He assisted in the passage of the national beef checkoff program in 1985 and was selected as the 1994 Michigan Cattleman's Association Businessman of the Year. Stafford will represent Michigan's cattle feeders, replacing Karen Stoneman, of Breckenridge, for a term ending May 31, 2000.

Clarence Wilbur, of Ontonagon, has been reappointed to represent the cow/calf sector for a term expiring May 31, 2000. He and his wife, Margo manage a 2,000 acre cattle operation in the Upper Peninsula. ■

## MSU food entrepreneur workshop

Michigan State University's Food Industry Institute (FII) is holding a "Food Entrepreneur Day" on Oct. 16 from 8:30 to 5:00 p.m. for individuals interested in producing and marketing a food product. The one-day workshop is phase one of a process designed to help individuals learn the steps of launching a food-based venture.

Held at MSU's Kellogg Conference Center in East Lansing, the topic will include:

- Tips from three owners of successful businesses
- Marketing options
- Business planning overview
- Protecting your recipe and your ideas (legal issues)
- Regulatory requirements for product safety and using information technology (e.g. the Web) to gather information and market your product.

For those committed to launching a food-based business, the FII is willing to assist you in locating expertise at MSU to deal with technical concerns, product development, market feasibility studies, packaging issues and food safety. This is considered "Phase II and III" of the project and will take place at a later time.

Registration is limited to the first 60 participants. Workshop fees are \$60 per individual and include refreshments, lunch, parking and a workshop resource book. Registrations will be accepted by mail, phone or fax until Oct. 10. Individuals with special needs are requested to contact the institute by Oct. 1 to make arrangements. For more information or a copy of the "Food Entrepreneur Day" brochure and registration, contact the Food Industry Institute at 1-800-579-FOOD. This is a toll-free call. ■

## MCIA has a good supply of wheat

Wheat growers looking for a variety of high-quality seed for planting this fall may want to consider the apparently ample supply available through the Michigan Crop Improvement Association (MCIA).

Manager Randy Judd says this year's crop had little problem meeting the tough MCIA standards that are required for certified seed.

"We tested more than 120 certified seed wheat samples since harvest, and they averaged 97 percent in germination tests," Judd said. "The vigor testing also indicates that growers will be going to

the field with extremely high-quality seed this fall."

The white varieties available from MCIA seed producers are AC Ron, Bavaria, Chelsea, Harus, Lowell and Ramrod. The red varieties include Cardinal, Freedom, Mendon and Wakefield.

All the varieties were entered in the Michigan State University wheat variety trials conducted in Huron, Ingham, Ionia, Kalamazoo, Lenawee, Saginaw, Sanilac and Tuscola counties this summer. Trial results are available from the county MSU Extension office or the department of crop and soil sciences at MSU. Call 517-355-0271. ■



## USDA: Children not following dietary guidelines

A study by the Agriculture Department shows only 1 percent of American children between ages 2 and 19 eat a healthy diet as recommended by the department.

USDA guidelines recommend eating six to 11 servings of grains each day, three to five servings of vegetables, two to four servings of fruit, two to three dairy products and five to seven ounces of meat. The guidelines also call for 10 percent or less of daily intake

to be fat and sugar. According to the USDA survey of 3,307 children, only 30 percent met the dietary recommendations for fruit, grain, meat and dairy, and 36 percent ate the recommended amount of vegetables. The study showed children average 40 percent of their energy intake from fat and added sugar.

Boys between the ages of 12 and 19 consumed the highest amount of the recommended food groups, but girls ate less food in efforts to lose weight. ■

## Michigan Farm Bureau anxious to see new meat regulations

**M**ichigan Farm Bureau, the state's largest farm organization, is taking a wait-and-see approach on new regulations unveiled by Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman following the *E. coli* outbreak in hamburger. Officially known as the Food Safety Enforcement Enhancement Act of 1997, the proposal would allow the U.S. Department of Agriculture to recall meat product and allow the Food and Drug Administration to recall other food products.

Although the Farm Bureau is waiting for legislation to be officially introduced and is conducting further analysis on the bill, Almy says the proposal is an attempt by Glickman to restore public confidence in USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS), which oversees all meat and poultry inspection programs.

"Farm Bureau has a long-standing record of supporting strong food safety laws and regulations to ensure consumer confidence in a safe food supply," Almy said. "Unfortunately, the main purpose of this proposal appears to be damage control for USDA rather than meaningful improvements in food safety."

Specifically, Glickman's bill would authorize the secretary of agriculture to:

- Stop the distribution and order the recall of adulterated or misbranded meat and poultry in situations that pose a reasonable probability of a threat to public health
- Refuse or withdraw inspection authority based on any willful or repeated violation of federal meat or poultry laws
- Impose civil monetary penalties for violations of the meat and poultry laws.

According to Almy, USDA does not need additional recall authority, saying the agency can already retain and condemn meat and poultry products in slaughter and packing plants and can suspend or withdraw inspection services. "This

action has always resulted in the shutting down of the plants and the recall of product in circulation," he said. "Every company ever faced with condemnation of product or removal of inspectors has voluntarily complied with USDA recall requests."

Almy is equally critical of the call for new civil penalties in the Glickman proposal, saying they are not necessary. "Under current guidelines, USDA can seek criminal penalties against meat and poultry processors who break the law or regula-

tions or who sell unwholesome meat," he explained. "Additional civil penalties will not improve food safety."

Provisions to encourage adoption of new technology and practices to improve food safety are also absent, notes Almy. "Ironically, although most food-borne illness can be prevented through proper food handling and preparation practices, as was the case with the recent *E. coli* incident, these practices are not addressed," he said. ■



## Forecaster's report: 1997 dry bean crop excellent

**T**he 1997 Michigan dry bean production is forecast at 5,580,000 hundredweight (cwt.), 20 percent above last season's crop, according to the Federal/State Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service.

Excellent planting weather prevailed for Michigan's dry beans. The crop got in early and remains in good shape. Healthy stands of long season variety beans point to near record yields. Yield is forecast at 1,800 pounds per acre, up 350 pounds per acre from last year.

Planted acreage of all dry beans, at 320,000 acres, is down 6 percent from 1996. A total of 310,000 acres are expected to be harvested, down 3 percent from last year.

Nationally, 1997 production of dry beans is forecast at 29.2 million cwt., up 7 percent from a year earlier, but down 5 percent from two years ago. Production is expected to be at or above 1996 levels in all states except Nebraska and North Dakota. The average yield is forecast at 1,666 pounds per acre, up 74 pounds from last year and 44 pounds above two years ago. Acres for harvest are at 1.75 million, up 2 percent from 1996. ■

### AGRI NOTES AND NEWS

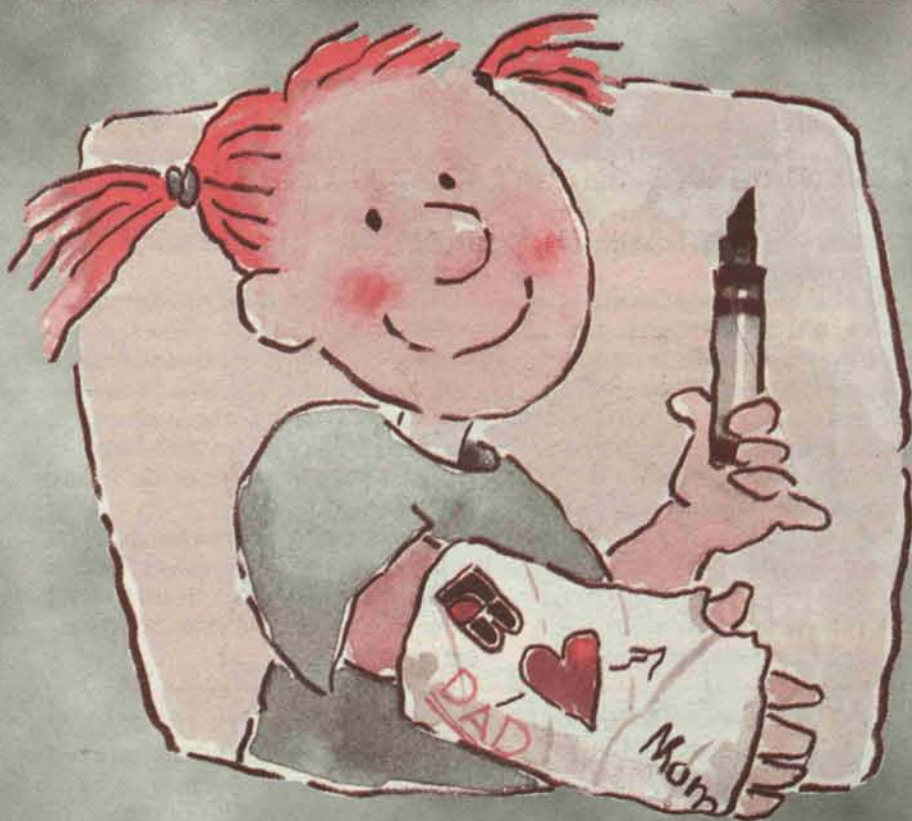
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# Pioneer's Constantine plant hosts 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration

For the first time in its 20-year history, Pioneer Hi-Bred's Constantine seed processing plant opened up its doors to over 1,000 customers and the public on Sept. 17 for a two-day celebration.

Farmers interested in learning more about how the seed gets to them had a chance to see Pioneer's massive production capacity as it began processing some of the first seed stock of the year. The plant was less than two weeks into harvest and was just beginning to hit its stride for the people in attendance.

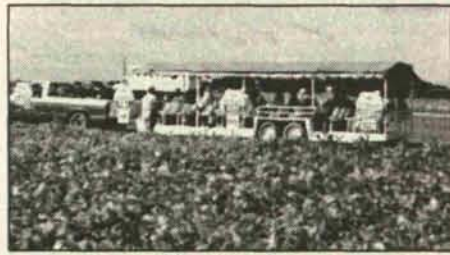
"It was an opportunity to highlight what we've done over the last 20 years," explains Terry Garner, Pioneer's Constantine plant manager. "This also gives people an opportunity to show the work they've done and highlight some of the new technologies that Pioneer is putting out."

"Next year, 40 percent of our products will be new technology," he adds. "We're pretty excited about that." Garner points out that much of the new technology revolves around new Bt corn products, high-oil

and Roundup Ready soybeans, and white corn.

"We had some Bt corn available this year and we'll have a large supply next year," notes Garner.

"The Bt technology is very good," adds Dave Mason, Pioneer's field sales manager for Michigan. "There was a history last year with heavy corn borer pressure that the technology works quite well. We're telling customers next



Pioneer opened its doors for everyone to see and utilized their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary open house to showcase some of their new technology coming to the market next year.

year we will have an adequate supply to meet the needs of Michigan growers."

Mason adds that many growers have a misconception that associates Bt as a negative factor that sacrifices yields which is untrue. "Each new variety offers superior performance with the Bt gene in them even if you don't have heavy European corn borer pressure," he adds.

The Constantine plant produces 40,000 acres a year, representing 32 products ranging from 75-day corn to 108-day varieties. "Right now we're harvesting two different hybrids that people will be able to see coming in the facility," Garner adds. "Everything is husked on the ear, as opposed to a regular farm with all shelled corn — everything we do up until it's dry is on the ear so we can sort it to make sure we have quality seed going through the storage."

According to Garner, seed harvest begins when moisture ranges hit the mid-30s and began the second week of September and will go through Oct. 21 if all goes as planned.

"We've been real surprised," he adds. "Across all of our hybrids we'll be 4 to 5 percent above estimates, and the seed quality looks real good."



Pioneer customers and other curious farmers had a chance to see the inner workings of one of the Midwest's largest seed processing facilities, from unloading semi trucks filled with seed stock still on the ear through the massive dryers and bulk storage.

## MDA's annual report for 1996 issued

The Michigan Department of Agriculture's Annual Report, combined with the Michigan Agricultural Statistics annual bulletin, was released recently in Lansing.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) Annual Report for 1996 details the agency's significant accomplishments for last year in the areas of food safety, environmental stewardship, support for production agriculture and consumer protection. The Michigan Agricultural Statistics bulletin for 1996-97 summarizes 1996 Michigan agricultural production.

According to MDA Director Dan Wyant, "the report is an important accounting to the citizens of Michigan who expect a high level of service for the investment they make in their government. We hope the commitment of our employees to that public trust is evident in the pages of the report."

Wyant said the combined publication is easy to use and contains some of the most important agricultural data in the state. "The employees of

MDA and the Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service (MASS) have worked together to present this vital information in a clear and thorough manner."

Highlights of the report include:

- During 1996, MDA established and expanded its partnerships with industry and academia to explore and promote the use of HACCP in Michigan to prevent outbreaks of food-borne illness. HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point system) identifies where hazards might occur in the food production process and puts into place stringent actions to prevent hazards from occurring.
- MDA formed a cider advisory committee to review current cider processing techniques and make recommendations that will further assure food safety. Last year, the department also tested samples from 114 of Michigan's licensed cider producers and found no evidence of *E. coli* bacteria.
- In 1996, the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program assisted over 3,000 farmers. A total of \$2.4

million in grants was provided in the areas of technical support, cost-share, demonstration/education, research and pesticide use surveys. Some 3,083 Farm\*A\*Syst evaluations were completed to assess risk of groundwater resources and over 1,200 wells in high-risk areas were decommissioned.

- Michigan's farmland protection program was recognized as a national leader when the U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded the state a \$1 million grant to be used as matching funds to help purchase the development rights on productive farmland. The farmland will remain in agricultural use and private ownership.
- Cranberry farming practices, approved by the Commission of Agriculture in 1996, will help Michigan restore a cranberry industry that faltered at the turn of the 20th Century. The practices were drafted through a partnership that included government, academia, industry and consumer groups.
- In September 1996, construction started at a

rural site outside Lansing for one of the nation's finest weights and measures laboratories. In less than one year, the doors opened to the facility deemed so state-of-the-art, weights and measures technicians from all over the country are now being trained there. The lab was named after the late Dr. Edward C. Heffron, who served as MDA's Food Division Director and who championed the development of the laboratory.

Wyant said the Michigan Agricultural Statistics bulletin for 1996-97 is a compilation of data collected from growers and contains special features on fruits and vegetables. The annual bulletins are used by growers and others in the agriculture industry to make important business decisions.

For a copy of the combined report, write: Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service, PO Box 20008, Lansing, MI 48901-0608. The report will also be available in the MASS section of MDA's World Wide Website at <http://www.mda.state.mi.us>

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# Helpful methods for controlling starling populations in dairy facilities

by Kurt Anderson  
Extension Dairy Agent  
Huron & Tuscola counties

**D**uring fall and winter weather, flocks of starlings are searching for sources of food and shelter. Their normal food supply of insects, fruit and grain is unavailable. Dairy facilities are attractive to flocks of starlings because they provide all of their needs: water, food, and shelter. While this situation is fine for the birds, it is very different for dairy producers.

Flocks of starlings are noisy and filthy (the mess will make you think your cows are flying!). One disease they carry is transmissible gastroenteritis virus which affects hogs. They can also carry the fungal disease, histoplasmosis. This respiratory disease affects humans and is usually mild. In rare cases, especially those involving chronically ill individuals, this disease can cause blindness or death. Starlings are suspected of transmitting several other livestock diseases, but these have not yet been confirmed.

The starling is not native to the United States. An enterprising individual back in the 1890s believed that America should have every bird mentioned in William Shakespeare's plays and brought them from Europe. The bird's habit of consuming insects did make it seem attractive. As starlings spread across the country they became a nuisance. They moved into urban areas and into feedlots causing losses in feed and annoying property owners with their noise and filth. Research has shown that for every 100 birds present, about 350 pounds of feed are lost per month. The dollar loss for a large farm can be significant.

Starlings are easily identified by their large bills and feet. The bill is yellow during the breeding season (January-June) and dark the remainder of the year. They have black feathers with gold flecks that can be observed when close. Adult birds weigh between 3 and 4 ounces, but appear larger because of their thick feathers. Starlings lay four to seven eggs per brood with a 13-day incubation period. Raising two broods a year is not unusual for the birds. With this rapid breeding rate it is easy to understand why getting them to leave when a flock attempts to move in is important. Flocks that move into dairy facilities are difficult to discourage. The longer they stay the harder they are to dislodge.

Many methods for starling control exist — so many, in fact, that you can be sure none is really fool-proof.

### Frightening

Many bird-frightening tools are available. They are most effective when birds first appear on the farm. Some examples of scaring devices are: inflatable eyes, recordings of bird distress calls, shiny foil strips, and propane and acetylene exploders. Move these devices every couple days to prevent birds from becoming accustomed to their presence. Some — like the distress call, exploders or gun shots — are annoying but effective. Again, they are most effective when the flock first arrives.

Once birds raise a couple of broods they are nearly impossible to frighten away. Starlings are not protected by law in any state, but shooting enough to make a significant impact on their population is hard.

### Repellents

Researchers are developing some repellents. One that has promise is methyl anthranilate (artificial grape flavor). This material could be added to livestock feed and is a repellent to starlings.

Coating ledges with a sticky material or eliminating ledges in facilities discourages roosting. Nylon netting is another method that prevents birds from roosting in buildings.

### Baiting

Starlicide, a product developed in the 1960s by the Denver Wildlife Research Center, is available as a complete bait from Purina Mills. It is not toxic to farm livestock and will not harm scavengers and predators that feed on dead birds. The active ingredient in this product is 3-chloro p-toluidine hydrochloride. Spread the bait out of the reach of poultry and desirable birds. A black rubber calf bucket

makes a good bait feeder. Use one with low sides to prevent frightening the starlings from eating. Avoid placing bait in bright-colored or shiny containers because these cause birds to shy away. The best time to bait is from dawn to midday when birds feed most aggressively. Placing the bait in their flight path to increase feeding is

important. Prebaiting the area helps get the birds used to eating in that area.

Do not use the number of dead birds at the feeding station to judge bait effectiveness. Many birds will die in their roosts or flying between the roost and feeding sites. Observing the size of the flock to evaluate the results of your program is best.

### Summary

The best control is to persistently use a variety of methods. Control is most effective if begun when the flock first moves into the dairy. Vary bird scaring device locations to prevent the starlings from getting accustomed to them. In the winter, the dairy might represent the flock's only viable food supply and they will not abandon it easily. The longer they stay, the harder they will be to eliminate. Dairy producers must be as stubborn as the starlings or put up with their noise and filth. ■



## Helpful guide for calculating cost of milk production

**W**ith dairy prices no where near the record levels of a year ago, many producers are looking for ways to cut costs from parts of their operations.

The following worksheet developed by MSU department of agricultural economics' Dr. Sherrill Nott estimates the cost of milk production per hundredweight using an individual's income tax form.

According to Dr. Nott, the worksheet allocates costs between dairy enterprises and all other enterprises, such as hay and silage, by assuming the cost of other enterprises are equal to their gross sales. This is done by subtracting gross sales of non-milk items from total farm

cash expenses. Expenses include interest, but not principal payments. This is a simplifying assumption that tends to overstate the dollars allocated to non-milk expenses. Cost of milk production therefore may be understated.

How can a dairy producer effectively control costs? First, you should focus on those costs that represent a large percentage of the total cost of production. Feed costs and labor will fit into this category. Secondly, concentrate on items that can be managed. For example, significantly reducing taxes on your existing property will be difficult. Options likely will exist for managing purchased feed and hired labor. ■

## Corn breeding enters a new era

**I**n the past half century, corn yields have more than tripled, mostly because of plant breeding. But that's only the beginning of advances for the crop, thanks to a new cooperative project begun last year by public and private breeders.

Until now, yields of hybrids have increased steadily by breeding the best inbred lines together. But that's resulted in a narrowed genetic base. A broader genetic base would help plant breeders develop hybrids less likely to succumb to insect and disease epidemics. A company's efforts to breed a new line adapted to U.S. growing conditions and with exotic genes have normally taken up to 20 years—with no guaranteed success.

Breeding goals may be reached quicker as researchers in 20 companies, 16 universities and six locations of USDA's Agricultural Research Service pool

resources in a project called GEM, short for Germplasm Enhancement of Maize. Their goal: to search out commercially interesting genes from exotic and U.S. corn varieties. Already identified are promising breeding lines that produce grain with 16 percent protein and 6 percent oil. Today's Corn Belt hybrids contain about 10 percent protein and 4 percent oil.

GEM is a follow-up to ARS's Latin American Maize Project, or LAMP, financed by Pioneer Hi-Bred International of Des Moines, Iowa. LAMP evaluated 12,000 Latin American and U.S. corn varieties for their breeding value and identified the 268 most promising. The cooperative effort should foster development of specialty corns, to increase the U.S. share of agricultural export markets and provide more predictable quality characteristics at home and abroad. ■

## USDA announces new voluntary program to develop wildlife habitat

**A**griculture Secretary Dan Glickman recently announced a new program that will help farmers, ranchers, and other landowners protect critically important wildlife habitat. USDA's Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a land management — rather than a land retirement — program.

WHIP provides both technical assistance and cost-share payments to landowners to help establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat. In addition, if the landowner agrees, cooperating state wildlife agencies and nonprofit or private organizations may provide expertise or additional funding to help landowners complete a project.

"WHIP will help the nation's landowners voluntarily develop habitat for wildlife on private lands that comprise over 70 percent of the land in this country," Glickman said. "WHIP also offers farmers and ranchers an opportunity to meet their production needs in ways that are compatible with providing fish and wildlife habitat." A number of habitat types are rapidly disappearing. These include many of the native grasslands, savannas, and barrens, as well as certain types of forest lands. Other habitats such as wetlands, riparian forests, rivers, and streams have suffered a serious decline in quality and/or quantity. Habitat loss is the number one reason for the decline in fish and wildlife populations. WHIP offers landowners the opportunity to put back some of these precious habitats.

Under the 1996 farm bill, WHIP provides cost-share assistance up to 75 percent of the cost of installing wildlife habitat practices. Cost-share payments may be used to establish new practices or replace practices that fail for reasons beyond the landowner's control. The total cost-share amount cannot exceed \$10,000 per agreement.

"Under the program," Glickman said, "landown-

ers may restore aquatic habitat as well as adjacent streambanks, wetlands, and uplands. The goal is to provide the best habitat possible for the species of fish and wildlife the landowner is trying to help. Beyond that," Glickman added, "WHIP is just one component of the conservation improvements a farmer might want to make, and we encourage them to work with us to see how all of USDA's conservation programs can help on their operations."

To participate in WHIP, individuals who own or control land agree to prepare and implement a wildlife habitat development plan, with assistance from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the local conservation district. The plan describes the landowner's goals for improving wildlife habitat, includes a list of practices and a schedule for installing them, and details the steps necessary to maintain the habitat for the life of the agreement. Agreements generally last from five to 10 years.

Land is ineligible for WHIP if it is in the Conservation Reserve Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, or Water Bank Program, or is subject to an Emergency Watershed Protection Program floodplain easement.

WHIP is currently budgeted for \$50 million total through the year 2002. Funds will be distributed to states based on state wildlife priorities which may include wildlife habitat areas, targeted species and their habitats, and specific practices. State priorities are developed through a locally led process that identifies wildlife resource needs and finalized in consultation with the State Technical Committee. WHIP applications will be ranked at the county level and those that provide the greatest wildlife benefits will be funded.

For more information, landowners may contact USDA Service Centers and NRCS, which administers the program. ■

### COST PER CWT. OF MILK SOLD

* = Fill In From Your Records			
1	Gross (not net) total dollars of milk sales per year \$:*		
2	Amount sold Lbs: *	Cwt.: _____	Milk income \$ per cwt.: <input type="text"/>
3	Cash Farm Expenses (mostly from Part II, Federal Schedule F)		
	<b>COLUMN A</b>		<b>COLUMN B</b>
12	Car, truck	26	a&b Rent, lease
13	Chemicals	27	Repairs, maintenance
14	Conservation	28	Seeds, plants
15	Custom hire	30	Supplies
18	Feed purchased	31	Taxes
19	Fertilizer, lime	32	Utilities
20	Freight, trucking	33	Vet, breed, med
21	Gas, fuel, oil	34	a Other: _____
22	Insurance	b _____	c _____
23a & 23b	Interest	c _____	d _____
24, 25 and 17	Labor	d _____	
38	<b>Total Column A</b>	<b>Total Column B</b>	
39	Cash Expenses Totaled (Line 38, Columns A + B):		
40	Gross sales of farm items other than milk:		
41	Cull cows: *	Deacon calves: *	
42	Other livestock: *	Corn, wheat: *	
INVENTORY CHANGES			
43	Other crops: *	Cattle and feed: *	
44	<b>Non-milk income items totaled (Lines 41 + 42 + 43):</b>		
45	Cash expenses (Line 39) minus non-milk income (Line 44):		
46	Cwt. milk from Line 2:	<input type="text"/>	
47	Line 45 divided by Line 46 = cash cost per cwt:		
48	Family living: *	Divided by cwt.:	
49	(Line 47 + 48) Cash cost + family living per cwt:		
50	Depreciation: *	Divided by cwt.:	
51	Principal repaid: *	Divided by cwt.:	
52	Line 49 + (50 or 51) Cost Per Cwt.: <input type="text"/>		
			(compare with line 2)

\*Use line 50, Depreciation, or line 51, Principal, but not both!



# Profitability in beef cow-calf herds

by Dr. Paul H. Coe

Michigan's cow-calf industry labors to survive the bottom of another beef cycle. Prices for feeder cattle fell from highs of \$1.10 per pound in 1993 to 40 to 60 cents per pound by 1995-96. With small average herd sizes and income supplemented by one, and sometimes two, off-farm jobs, many Michigan cattlemen weather economic lows better than producers whose primary income results from the sale of their calf crop each year. Low calf prices, which are predicted to increase in 1997 or 1998, prompt cattlemen to consider changes to improve farm profitability.

As I visit beef cattle farms around the state, the problems I see have more to do with management than with infectious diseases. Few cow-calf operators know how much it costs them to produce a pound of marketed calf. Cows are too big to efficiently maintain body condition on available feeds during winter or too small to produce calves with the growth potential to achieve desirable carcass weights. Often both types live in the same herd. Producers with small herds seldom group cows for winter feeding.

Many producers have some concept of nutrition but fail to take advantage of feed analysis and computer-aided ration balancing. Thin cows on diets deficient in essential nutrients fail to respond well to the vaccination programs and fail to produce sufficient good-quality colostrum to protect their newborn calves.

"Bad vaccines" or "disease-carrying wildlife"

often get the blame for disease outbreaks. Investigation often reveals that the more likely culprits are poor nutrition, addition of new cattle without knowing their disease status, pathogen build-up from concentrating cattle or failing to separate cows and calves from their manure, and placing human convenience ahead of science in designing health maintenance programs.

A recent report from the National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) compared data from 35 cow-calf producers who completed Standardized Performance Analysis. The group was divided into 13 herds with positive economic returns and 22 herds with negative economic returns. Profitable farms tended to optimize rather than maximize production. Weaned calf weight per cow exposed averaged 422 pounds for the profitable herds and 428 pounds for the unprofitable ones, suggesting that the negative return herds spent more to put on 6 pounds than they were worth at sale time. Without an advantage in pounds of calf weaned per cow exposed, the profitable herds improved returns by increasing efficiency and obtaining better market prices for their calves.

While the biggest difference between the groups had to do with land values and the amount of debt carried per cow, several other factors provide opportunities for veterinarians to impact efficiency in cow-calf operations. Heifers delivered their first calf at 24 months in three-fourths of the profitable herds compared to half of the negative return herds. Positive return herds rated price as the most important factor

in determining when to sell calves and averaged \$1.07 per hundredweight more than the negative return herd. Operations showing positive returns were less likely to feed expensive feeds such as corn silage, grain, or creep feed, and more likely to use specific calving pastures (46 percent vs. 27 percent) and three or more breeds (62 percent vs. 27 percent).

There was little or no difference between the two groups of operations in herd size, daily observation frequency of cows during calving season, timing of calving assistance, or parasite control programs. Positive return producers were, however, more likely to seek veterinary advice about parasite control strategies.

Weighing and measuring frame size of the calves evaluates the product and leads directly to discussion of selection criteria for heifers and bulls. Bulls intended for breeding need desirable genotype, phenotype, temperament, and a 23-26 cm scrotal circumference at weaning to have a high probability of becoming decent sires. Replacement heifers should be appropriate in frame size and born early in the calving season to breed early, reducing age at first calving.

Collection and analysis of feed samples at this time allows accurate planning for winter feeding. Individual body condition and production information coupled with knowing the quality and quantity of available feeds and the number of potential replacements improves culling decisions. A well-designed weaning facility reduces calf stress and provides the potential to retain feeders until prices are most favorable. Produc-

ers may seek advice on pen size, bunk length, ration formulation, water supply, and design of handling facilities to maximize efficiency.

The NAHMS study indicated that profitable operations were twice as likely to use computerized records as those losing money. Cow-calf producers measure production every fall, making this a good time to preach the value of records. Systems vary from the calendar on the wall to one of the slick software programs like those previewed at the American Association of Bovine Practitioners (AABP) meeting in San Diego. All record systems begin with individual identification of cow and calf, so fall herd processing is a good time to adopt a numbering system and install ear tags in the cows. The only good records are the ones that cattlemen will use, so selection of a system has to be based on producer goals.

The next time most veterinarians hear from cow-calf producers will probably be spring. Though too late to adjust body condition, calving calls provide an opportunity to see how well the feeding program worked and recommend changes, if necessary, to improve breeding performance. Evaluation of the calving facilities and cattle traffic through the barns should be geared to avoiding microbe build-up and overwhelming exposure of newborn calves to pathogens. Most disease outbreaks among neonatal beef calves can be directly related to excessive exposure to manure. The pathognomonic sign is an increase in disease incidence as calving season progresses. ■

## Handling troublesome pests in corn

Corn hybrids that can naturally get rid of one of the most damaging insects known to farmers are attracting a lot of attention.

These corn hybrids were named for the *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) gene that is implanted in them using the tools of biotechnology. The Bt gene is a natural toxin for the European corn borer (ECB), an insect that can cause severe yield loss in cornfields.

Bt hybrids are being embraced by many farmers because they can be more effective and less costly than insecticides. But, just as consumers may forego a costly pest control treatment if a cheaper one is just as effective, farmers now must weigh the costs and benefits of insecticides versus the new Bt hybrids, which usually come with a technology fee.

Farmers should assess the extent of their ECB problem and weigh the potential for return against the cost of the Bt hybrids, explains Gene Kassmeyer, agronomy services manager, Garst Seed Co., Slater, Iowa. If the insect pressure is likely not to be severe or if poor soil conditions make high yields risky, farmers may be just as satisfied choosing a corn hybrid that has a strong natural resistance to the corn borer.

If, on the other hand, the pest continues to hammer away at yields on good soil each year, an investment in a Bt hybrid may make sense. Garst offers both conventional hybrids with natural resistance and high-yielding Bt hybrids. Soon, a corn hybrid even more special will be introduced.

"We are combining other valuable traits with Bt in our elite hybrids, such as resistance to diseases or herbicides," says Kassmeyer.

In fact, Garst plans to release a hybrid with genes resistant to two different and popular herbicides — imidazolinone-based (IMI) and glufosinate ammonium-based — plus a novel strain of Bt for corn borers.

### Good news for corn farmers in the battle against weeds

The home gardener knows that it doesn't take much for weeds to get out of control. So does the corn farmer who manages hundreds of acres. No wonder they are both looking for weed control options.

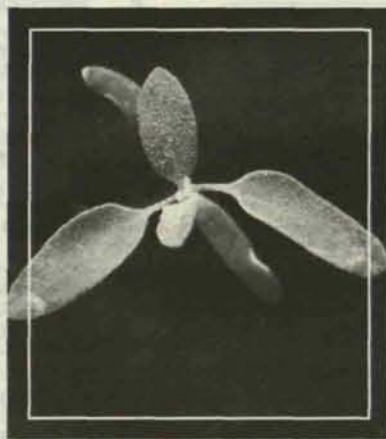
Some of the toughest weed problems farmers encounter didn't have suitable solutions until a few years ago. That might sound surprising, considering the number of crop protection products on the market today, but science has traditionally been hard pressed to find effective herbicide products that didn't kill the corn plant along with the weed.

Through biotechnology techniques, a corn hybrid was developed by Garst Seed Co., in the early 1990s, which is used with an effective herbicide that won't harm the corn, just the weeds. These hybrids have been so well received that Garst reports sales have increased six-fold. IMI-Corn™ hybrids, as they are now, are resistant to imidazolinone herbicides — products that previously only controlled weeds in soybeans. Now, farmers can plant corn and handle the same hard-to-control weeds. IMI-Corn also allows farmers to explore management options, preserve corn yields and maintain environmental stewardship.

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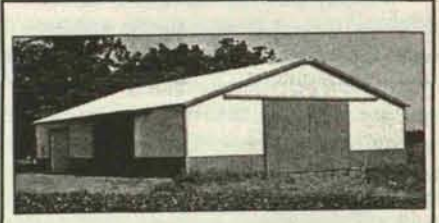
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**12**  
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**19**  
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