Elton R. Smith Chair to sponsor farm bill video conference

The new version of the farm bill recently approved by the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate will be discussed March 21 via satellite by agricultural economists from Michigan State University and Purdue University.

The broadcast, sponsored by the Elton R. Smith Endowed Chair in Food and Agricultural Policy at MSU, will be available for viewing from 9:45 a.m. until noon at most Extension offices in Michigan and Indiana.

Because the new bill contains major changes in U.S. Department of Agriculture farm programs, the broadcast should be important to farmers, agribusiness managers, farm credit representatives, farm advisors, and landholders who rent farmland to growers, according to Sandra Batie, holder of the Elton R. Smith Chair.

She says that the new farm bill, expected to be completed by the end of this month, contains "freedom to farm" provisions that replace all existing programs for corn, grain sorghum, wheat, cotton, and rice.

The new bill stipulates that:

- All existing acre-setting provisions are eliminated.
- Farmers will be allowed to plant a wider range of crops and retain their eligibility for program payments.
- Conservation programs, including the Conservation Reserve Program, will be continued.

Batie says the broadcast will also include discussions on the new farm bill provisions and the effect legislation will have on program payments.

The broadcast should be important to farmers, agribusiness managers, farm credit representatives, farm advisors, and landholders who rent farmland to growers.

House farm bill passage paves way for final action

The farm bill that passed the House by a vote of 270-155, represents a major step forward for American agriculture as lawmakers crafted the best bill possible given the constraints of budget pressure and the approach of planting season, according to Al Almy, director of Michigan Farm Bureau's public affairs division.

Almy expects the farm bill proposals from both the Senate and the House to be in conference committee for just over a week before being sent back to both chambers for concurrence and then sent to Pres. Clinton for approval no later than mid-March.

"The Agricultural Market Transition Act (H.R. 2342) includes most of the priorities we sought in farm legislation," said Almy. "It continues the move toward market orientation started in past farm bills, provides greater flexibility for farmers to produce for the market, and provides a safety net for producers."

Most importantly, said Almy, the House action increases the chance that Congress will enact a final bill before spring planting begins in much of the nation. Planting has already started in the South and the lack of farm legislation has meant great uncertainty for farmers, especially in securing operating loans.

Even though there are differences between the House measure and the one passed earlier by the Senate, Almy said he is hopeful a compromise measure can be crafted quickly. Dairy program provisions figure to be one of the major issues of discussion in the conference committee. The House approved a Farm Bureau opposed dairy amendment that would phase out price supports for butter, powder and cheese over five years and prevent nationwide adoption of the California milk standards.

"There is optimism among lawmakers that both chambers will be able to produce a new farm bill in time to prevent a temporary extension of the existing program and provide a more certain future for producers, especially dairy producers," Almy said.

"We are very pleased to see the Elton R. Smith Chair used to communicate rapidly via the MSU satellite system with producers on critical issues such as the farm bill. The dramatic changes being made in the new farm bill need to be fully understood by producers here in Michigan," says MFB President Jack Laurie.

People interested in attending the broadcast are requested to contact their county Extension office so that adequate seating arrangements can be made.

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Sell products and services in the Michigan Farm News classifieds—Page 17
Red meat production sets January record

Commercial red meat production for the United States totaled 3.81 billion pounds during January, 12 percent above the previous record high for January set in 1992, according to the American Farm Bureau.

Retail production of red meat for January was up 10 percent from last year and slightly above the previous record high for January set in 1976. Head kill was 5.1 percent above the wholesale average for a year earlier.

The average live weight decreased 1 percent from last year, 1.195 pounds.

Red meat production totaled 3.81 billion pounds. This production was up 11 percent from a year earlier. Calf slaughter totaled 134,800, up 16 percent from the previous year. The average live weight decreased 1 percent from last year, 1.195 pounds.

(ag department responds to barcia's inquiry; extending planting deadline to June 25)

In response to a letter from U.S. Congressman Jim Barcia (Bar-City, Ohio), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency has extended the planting deadline for dry beans from June 10 to June 25, 1996. Formerly, farmers had to plant beans by June 10 to qualify for crop insurance.

"I am very pleased with this decision and believe that the extension will result in more farmers purchasing crop insurance," Barcia said. "Farmers were caught in a bind with the June 10 deadline. If they had to plant beans by June 10 to qualify for crop insurance, the quality of their crops might suffer. If they planted after June 10, they wouldn't qualify for insurance and would be operating at their own risk." Barcia voted in support of the extension on JD 6A, 26, 1996, urging the department to extend the planting deadline, since at least half of all the beans planted in Michigan for the same planting interterm.

"We wanted to encourage as many farmers as possible to sign up for crop insurance," Barcia continued. "This extension is impossible for farmers to follow good management practices by forcing plantings earlier than normally done in Michigan, particularly in Allegan, Kent and Ottawa counties.

Allegan, Kent and Ottawa to host farm land preservation forum

In an effort to address the escalating loss of farmland around three of Michigan's largest agricultural production counties, the county Farm Bureaus from Allegan, Kent and Ottawa have teamed up with their respective township associations, MIU Extension, the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, the Development Council and Allegan Farmland Trust to sponsor an open forum on March 19 at Le Petit Chateau in Allegan at 6:30 p.m. The purpose of the forum is to increase awareness of the rate of farmland loss in this area," explains Kent County Farm Bureau President Jim May. "There are opportunities to get all of us to collaborate more clearly. The more that is involved, the more that we want to bring together all of these groups together.

The meeting will be held at Le Petit Chateau, which is located directly across from the campus of Grand Valley State University. For details, contact the Kent County Farm Bureau at (616) 734-1392, or Ottawa County Farm Bureau at (616) 899-4310.

Michigan crop values increase

The preliminary value of Michigan field crops, fruits and vegetables produced in 1995 was $5.1 billion, according to the Michigan Farm Bureau.

The Michigan value of crops was $2.3 billion, 14 percent above the previous year. Corn, soybeans and oats were the three most valuable field crops. Corn was the highest valued crop, estimated at $1.0 billion. Soybeans, which increased 27 percent in value compared to 1994, ranked second in value at $974 million, according to estimates.

Researchers propose fresh veggies to carry "healthy" label

The food and Drug Administration said frozen fruits and vegetables have virtually the same amounts of nutrients as their fresh counterparts, opening up the possibility of labeling changes.

The agency is proposing to allow frozen produce—plants vegetables and fruit, not the varieties covering existing labels, to be marketed and packaged with the term "healthy." The canned produce industry also has petitioned the FDA for a similar labeling change, but the FDA said it would not submit enough data to make a determination whether canned produce is as healthy as fresh.

The agency is expected to finalize the labeling rule in the first quarter of 1997, given the negative reaction from food processors, retailers and consumers.

Bright outlook for U.S. meat exports

Strong demand, rising world incomes and lower international trade barriers have helped create increasing opportunities for U.S. meat exporters.

Reuters reports from a California meat conference.

"U.S. red meat exports have just been going through the roof," said Hal Shemon, president of H. Shemon International, a San Francisco meat company that focuses on exporting.

"We estimate that this year's U.S. exports of beef, pork and lamb could exceed 48 billion, compared with 35 billion in 1988. We are seeing Chicago and the Midwest opening up more trade in our direction, which is a change.

The economist said the outlook for beef was bright, bolstered by world-wide demand for the United States' better opportunities and a more level playing field than we've ever had before.

"For example, the United States has been able to weaken trade barriers to meat shipments to Japan and South Korea. Johnson says some of the big markets of the future will be the Philippines and Asia.

In general, there is good demand from Latin America, Africa, Asia, the Mideast and eastern Europe. Shemon notes that pork is becoming an important product in overseas sales, especially in Japan and Russia. He expects Russia to develop as a market for U.S. beef, according to a Reuters report on the National Meat Association convention in San Francisco.

New crop insurance plans in the works

The Agriculture Department will be testing two pilot crop insurance programs that will allow farmers affected under other conditions, according to Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman.

"We need to protect against the possibility that some farmers may lose insurance protection because of circumstances beyond their control, such as the storm in Texas," Glickman said.

Great Lakes Young Cooperators Dairy Leadership Conference

The Independent Cooperative Milk Producers Association (ICMPA) and the Michigan Milk Producers Association (MMPA) have announced that a Great Lakes Young Cooperators Dairy Leadership Conference will be conducted during the first week of June of 1997. The conference will be conducted in cooperation with the Michigan Farm Bureau. A tentative program is pending.

USDA sees higher farm incomes

The Department of Agriculture is projecting higher farm incomes for 1996, bolstered by higher world supplies for feed grains. Net farm income is projected at $17.2 billion this year, up from $37.8 billion in 1995. USDA expects net farm income to rise to $21 billion in 1997.

For the rest of the century, net farm income is expected to remain between $36 billion and $43 billion, a decline of 25 percent in real terms.

The economists said high feed grain prices meant crop receipts were projected at $169.5 billion for 1996, above the record $162 billion forecast for 1995. Despite high export prices, livestock supplies will continue rising. Cattle receipts will continue to rise, while feed grain cash receipts fell at $158.9 billion in 1995, compared with the average of $188 billion from 1986-1994.

The economists said that according to the government's forecast, farm cash income should exceed $160 billion this year, compared with the record $172 billion forecast for 1995. While farm income projections were shaped to consider a "worse-case" for feed prices, the government was forecasting that world feed prices could be lower than 1996 in the next several years, while farm price expectations were projected to consider "best-case" conditions.

The economist said the outlook for farms specializing in cattle, hogs and sheep remained bleak through 1997, while an upturn in prices from last year may not be enough to make up for lost income. "We expect dairy farmers to be in better shape than producers of some feed grains and soybeans," said USDA economist.

Russian ag losses

Russia's agriculture sector last year lost about $450 million, while the politicians jumped 40 percent, according to Itar-Tass news agency.

About 85 percent of former state-run collectives had been recognized into joint-stock companies and production and trade had not taken place, leading to losses, the state report said.
Dairy amendment to the farm bill offered by Congressmen Solomon and Dooley and approved by the House

This amendment replaces the dairy title of the bill as reported by the Agriculture Committee. The main features include:

- Setting the support rate for milk at 10.15 per cent in calendar year 1996 and reducing the level of cash payment to 30 cents per cent through 2000.
- Continuing to support milk prices through 2000 by purchasing butter, cheese, and nonfat dry milk.
- Giving the Secretary of Agriculture discretionary authority to allocate the price of support between butter and nonfat dry milk as to minimize milk price volatility.
- Setting the budget assessment.
- Eliminating the budget assessments.
- Limiting the number of federal milk marketing orders to between 10 and 14 for multiple pricing points. The amended orders must be announced by Dec. 31, 1998, and implemented not later than Dec. 31, 2000. Effective Jan. 1, 2001, the Secretary shall not use any funds to administer more than 14 orders.

- Extending the Dairy Checkoff Program to 2002, expanding the Dairy Board to include market development activities and requiring Dairy Board to be used to the extent allowed under the Uruguay Round trade agreement.
- Repealing Section 102, which states that no State shall establish for a greater manufacturing allowance than is permitted under Federal programs.
- Prohibiting any law or regulation from preventing California from establishing a model solids standards for fluid milk products.
- Continuing the fluid milk promotion program through 2002.

According to the USDA Interagency Dairy Analysis Team, the Solomon amendment will cost dairy producers $7 billion in income over seven years.

MFB position: Farm Bureau opposed the amendment.

STATE ISSUE
Elimination of no-fault auto insurance territorial constraints

HB 5177, sponsored by Rep. Gerald H. Law (R-Plymouth), would eliminate current state mandates creating auto insurance territorial constraints. Currently, an insurance company must comply with the following restrictions:

- an insurance company's lowest territorial base rate can be no less than 95 percent of the highest rate.
- contiguous territories can differ by only 10 percent.
- insurance companies are required to have 20 territories.

These legislative constraints were enacted in the early 1980s in an attempt to ensure equity and accessibility of auto insurance to Michigan citizens.

These measures have had the opposite effect, however, as insurance companies have left Michigan. In 1993, there were 256 insurance companies writing in Michigan. In 1993, there were only 125 companies in Michigan.

MFB position: Farm Bureau supported HB 5177.

STATE ISSUE
Tourist-oriented directional signs (TODS)

HB 4770, sponsored by Rep. Sandra Hill, establishes a Tourist-Oriented Directional Signs (TODS) Program. The program allows the Director of the Department of Transportation to approve tourist-oriented activities in non-urban areas to use highway signs to attract tourists. To qualify for sign space, an activity would have to attract 1,200 or more non-residents for a tourist activity.

The bill requires that the state of Michigan develop standard logos for different types of highways and each county shall develop a permit and F-M direction sign. The Michigan present law prohibits signs on state highways or visible from a state highway, unless the sign:

- is on land zoned commercial business or industrial (excluding agricultural, forestry, graving or farming) and is within 800 feet of the business or commercial operation, or
- is located on the premises where the business is operated.

The package has passed the House and is in the Senate Transportation and Tourism Committee. MFB position: Farm Bureau supports HB 4770.

MFB contact: Tim Goodrich, ext. 248.
elofstoragecompleted—500,000forcornand
Meeuwsensaid."We'vegotjustoveramillionbush-
eriesonbeansforthe plant'sexpectedstart-update.
"When you put an extra demand on the avail-
land for more beans, you're going to take it away from some-
thing," Meeuwsen explained. "If you take
them corn or wheat, you've increased the demand
on those acres. So we expect everybody
to be dragged up since the markets move together."

On the finished product side, ZFS will pro-
ducing 46 percent and 44 percent soy meal, crude
soy oil, hull feed and mill feed. The hull feed,
explains Meeuwsen, is a high-fiber product with
about an 11 percent crude protein that will be mar-
keted primarily in the Zeland area since it's so light.
The freight kills you, since you can only get
10 tons in a 40-foot truck load," Meeuwsen said. "So this
will be of benefit locally since the freight will be
less. We've got area dairy producers as well as some feed
people that have expressed an interest in the

"We've got about 70 percent of the extraction
equipment in and most of the empty pounds," Meeuwsen said. "We've got just over a million bush-
als of storage completed — 500,000 for corn and
500,000 for soy beans. We're essentially going to
end up at about 2 million bushels of storage used
primarily for soy only."

That storage will come in handy once the plant is
up and running at full production. Meeuwsen anticipate a need for 16,000 to 17,000 bushels of beans daily. The company has started taking delivery
on beans for the plant's expected start-up date.

Hopes of retroactive capital gains cuts crumbling

Although Republican leaders remain positive
about approval this year of a measure to cut
capital gains taxes, if such a bill is passed, the cuts
most likely will not be retroactive to 1995, according to
a recent Wall Street Journal article.

The experts are now saying the cuts will be
effective at the start of this year, or whenever Con-
gress and the president approve a budget package.

At present, soy can be sold to the market at
about 20 to 25 cents under. He predicts the impact on the

corn and wheat basis will be positive, too.

"When the new processing is up and running,
we're going to push very, very
capital gains," House
Tax Ways and Means Committee Chairman Bill Archer (R- Texas) recently said.

When asked about retroactive tax cuts, Archer said: "Nothing is ever hopeless in Wash-
ington. But the chances are far less now than they were a month ago."

By April 1, we can expect to see a decision made. If the retroactive cuts don't pass, we
might be able to see a delay in the 1995 tax return for those who have already paid taxes on the
Suppose that you sell your home for $500,000, which is $200,000 above the purchase price of $300,000. If you sell the home for $500,000 and defer any tax on the $200,000 gain until you sell the home again, you will still owe taxes on the $200,000 gain in 2002. If the retroactive cuts do pass, you will only owe taxes on the $200,000 gain in 2002 if you sell the home again before a delay in the retroactive cuts takes place.

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March 15, 1996

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**Seasonal Commodity Price Trends**

**Corn**

- July $2.70
- Soybeans $0.65
- Wheat $0.90
- Hogs $1.25
- Cattle $1.50

Prices: 
- täglich: $1.60
- Higher: $1.00
- Lower:
- $1.90

**SOYBEANS**

I have also made changes in my projection of the 1996-97 Soybean Supply-Demand situation. I lowered projected plantings by almost a million acres, but still up a half million acres from 1995-96. Historically, the 2.5 new crop soybean/corn price ratios and 1.9 ratio we are today would result in a 1.2 million acre cutback in planted acreage. However, I feel there are several reasons that we will not

**HOGS**

I frag factors are still at our March 1 levels, we have opportunities to lock in prices for some of our 1996 production at levels which exceed fundamental long-term levels. On March 29, the National Pork Producers Council released Hog and Pig Report. We have seen a lot of new money in the hog market, especially with the exception of the February report. There is a lot of new money being used, but it is not new, it is just money that has been switched from one category to another. The hog market is pricing new soybeans as if acreage will remain the same. This may mean we need a market adjustment after March 29. Consider having most of your old crop prices before the stocks and Flamingoes Report, as well as some of your new crop. You may also have to wait for some protection over most of your new crop, such as buying puts with the intention of only holding them for a short period of time. Again, set pricing goals and stick to them.

**CATTLE**

The monthly Cattle-On-Feed Report, released on Feb. 23, showed that total hogs on hand were up 2 percent, the industry was making adjustments to the combination of high corn prices and low feed prices. January placements were 105 percent of the same period below 95 percent and below 95 percent for January. For January 96 percent were 105 percent of the previous year.
Business Strategies

John D. Jones,
Telfarm Director and
district extension
farm management
agent, department of
agricultural economics.
Michigan State
University Extension

A
business manager must direct and supervise business operations. The act of management can be as much an art as a technical skill. Results are affected by many, many factors, some of which are external and cannot be controlled. Even with the best plans, there are specific activities for managers to complete to maintain a positive impact on the business.

The following graphic provides a good illustration of the management process:

Managing a business is similar to charting a course for a ship. The manager does the charting. To be effective, he must have goals. He must continually gather and analyze facts. On the basis of his analysis, he must make decisions and carry them out. The process is never ending. New information and analyses require alterations just as a change of wind and weather requires the captain of the ship to make frequent changes in guiding his vessel.


Starting with a Business Plan

The current Agricultural Management Advancement Program (AMAP) sponsored by MSU Extension does an excellent job of leading participants through a process of setting both long and short term goals. These goals set the business "mission" in the forefront to keep your direction focused on what is important to you.

Your business plan and mission statement must also recognize the impact of external factors such as public desires and needs, available and alternative markets, governmental regulations and other world factors.

The goal setting process works for any size business at any stage of growth. It helps sort out the chaff from the grain, and aids you to concentrate on progressing in areas that are important to you. For the well-organized manager, the business plan is something that embodies these goals and spells out tactics that will be needed to reach them.

Key Ingredients to a Business Plan

1. Mission statements personalize the business, giving it its own special identity, character and path for development. A strong mission statement will embody the important values of the business and the owners while addressing the major external circumstances.

2. Long-term goals should provide direction, and should be reasonable, achievable, inspiring, and conducive to the business mission. Long-term goals also need to be viable and eventual so that they can be reached in the future.

3. Short-term goals have to be specific and measurable so that they can be reached. The short-term goal should be set to have the greatest impact with respect to meeting your long-term goal. The short-term goal should also have a specified time period, usually a year or less.

Progress in California on methyl bromide extension bill

A bill that would extend use of methyl bromide Farm Management
March 15, 1996

Business management — "Stay the course?"

4. Tactical plans provide a road map of activities that need to be done to reach your short-term goal. Tactical planning involves a review of your goals, notes, calendar and unfinished activities. The tasks are prioritized with respect to importance and urgency. Then the tasks with instructions are communicated to the individuals involved.

Staying on the Right Track

The business plan is also a living document that requires continual attention and revision. The frequency for formal revision depends on the plan's complexity and the magnitude of adjustment needed to meet a change in actual versus planned action. A bad breath with mother nature can sometimes force your business plan to be unwieldy and in need of a serious revision.

Make needed revisions to your short-term goals as realistically as possible and press on, praying that the next time you will be treated favorably by mother nature. Continued perseverance toward your long-term business goals will yield the greatest progress as long as your efforts remain focused.

Financial Record-Keeping Needs

Business records for management and financial planning are where a good farm records program can provide the most benefit. These needs are critical to any business plan. The measurement of financial progress and stability is essential to any business plan, although there can be other goals related to individual non-monetary goals and values.

Monthly monitoring of the financial goals and progress is a wise practice. This means more than just balancing the checkbook. Check how your actual expenditures and incomes compare with your budgeted plan that maps out how you will meet your short-term goals. Some businesses will need to take periodic inventory and produce accurately financial statements for tighter management control and creditor needs.

Is your actual financial performance in agreement with your budgeted financial plan? Are changes needed in the future months to adjust for past occurrences? Is your marketing meeting the expectations in the budget? Are you able to lock-in quality inputs at good prices that will allow you to carry out the business plan? Do you have enough liquidity or working capital to meet the future cash flows needs of the business? These are a few of the questions to be answered during the periodic evaluations.

Cost Accounting by Enterprise

Cost accounting, also often called enterprise accounting, will provide the manager with a source of critical information needed for budgeting and planning. The extra efforts made in this area provide valuable management information that cannot be acquired anywhere else. It is the awareness and application of one's individual strengths that allows a business to prosper and grow. Cost accounting is the activity that gives the manager the needed internal information to pull together the optimal mix of enterprises.

What is the cost of production on your farm? To answer this question you must perform cost accounting. This can be done after the books are closed for the year with allocation of annual total expenses and incomes. Or, it means doing cost accounting allocations as income and expenses are entered into your records.

Be sure to make accurate adjustments for inventory build-up or reductions, and prepare or accrue expenses before producing cost accounting statements. It takes some effort, but it's the best way to know whether your crops or livestock are growing money.

Information for the Manager

High quality information, available where and when the farm manager needs it, is critical to proper decision making. How can one adequately assess alternative courses of action without high quality, dependable information? The Telfarm program has many features designed to provide decision-making information to the farm manager.

An excellent group of district Extension farm management agents and many Areas of Expertise and course Extension agents are very well equipped to assist in training you and modifying your own management information system. The management information system will then help you "stay the course" and make progress toward your business goals.

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During the 1995 hunting season, the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) has stepped up testing of the whitetail deer herd, while the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) has implemented a livestock surveillance program. According to MDA Livestock Specialist Kevin Kirk, as a precaution, the MDA has targeted 51 live stock herds, including cattle, goats, pigs, and llamas located within a five-mile radius of the hunt club for TB testing. The testing procedure can be a somewhat lengthy process, warns Kirk, meaning that it could be several months before all livestock testing is completed.

A total of 1,500 head of livestock will be tested, which begins with an injection of tuberculin under the skin next to the base of the tail. "The initial screening test, called the caudal fold test, is then held 72 hours later," according to Kirk. Three to 5 percent of all animals will normally test as suspect positive on this initial test, requiring a second testing procedure known as a comparative cervical or CC test. In this procedure, two subcutaneous injections are made in the neck. One is an avian complex type and the other is bovine type. Again, this test is held 72 hours later via skin measurements, and classified as either negative, suspect or reacted.

Thus far, 25 of the 51 herds have been tested and released, according to the MDA. Kirk says the MDA's testing will actually accomplish two purposes. "Testing will establish whether or not any livestock have been infected — and it will provide livestock producers statewide with concrete information on the risk, if any, of TB in livestock," he explained. "If the herds sampled thus far, none have tested positive, which suggests that the infection is limited to the whitetail deer herd. That's good news for all Michigan livestock producers, since it keeps the state's TB-free status intact."

Meanwhile, the DNR is continuing to test the area's whitetail deer herd. At last count, 19 deer were found to be infected from a sampling of over 500 deer. According to Kirk, the DNR plans to test over 3,000 deer from the area by year's end, including road-killed deer, and deer harvested through block hunting, DNR's recommended 25 to 35 deer per square mile figure. In an attempt to reduce deer herd concentrations in northeastern Michigan, the DNR issued a request Feb. 1 for hunters and individuals to stop feeding deer in hopes of naturally depopulating the herd during the harsh winter months. The deer herd population in the target area is estimated to average between 50 to 100 deer per square mile, well over the DNR's recommended 25 to 35 deer per square mile figure.

Despite the request, some producers and hunt club members apparently believe that feeding the deer herd will keep them located in a centralized area and away from livestock operations. As logical as that might seem, Kirk says discontinued feeding will actually eliminate the problem rather than extend it, and that the DNR's request is the better route for concerned livestock producers and hunt club members.

"The DNR has advised producers in the area that if deer attempt to move into agricultural areas in an attempt to eat with domestic livestock, to contact the DNR forpermits or to have the deer removed by the DNR itself," Kirk said. "Depopulation is the best option to eliminate TB altogether."

A March 13, "TB Update for Livestock Producers" meeting was scheduled for 12:30 p.m. at the Hillman Community Center. For more information, contact the Alpena Extension Service at (517) 394-6826.

Agriculfure Information Fact Sheet

**TB Facts**

The signs of disease depend upon what part of the body is most affected. Usually this is the lungs, resulting in coughing and difficulty in breathing. In general, infected animals will lose weight and appear to be in poor condition in later stages of the disease. Early-on in the disease, the animal may appear normal.

TB is spread primarily through the air. When an infected animal is in close contact with other animals, contamination from coughing and sneezing can spread the disease. Repeated or prolonged exposure is often a factor.

The disease is considered very rare among wild deer. Until 1995, only two deer had been diagnosed with TB in Michigan. In the fall of 1995, 15 deer in a northeastern Michigan hunt club were found to be infected. Artificially high concentrations of deer in the impacted area, due in large part to winter-long supplemental feeding, was very likely a major factor in the TB infection. It's known that the disease is most likely spread in situations where animals are overcrowded and stressed. For more information, you should call your local veterinarian or the Michigan Department of Agriculture at (517) 373-1077.

Source: Michigan Department of Agriculture Information Fact Sheet

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**Ag trade picture looks bright**

The USDA is forecasting a record $60 billion in U.S. agricultural exports for the 1996 fiscal year. Higher shipments of wheat and corn are the main factors. However, export volume is not seen hitting a record in FY 1996, falling short of the 102.6 million metric tons reported in the 1995 fiscal year. Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman says the U.S. reliance on ag trade will continue to grow. U.S. agriculture is currently twice as reliant on international markets as the U.S. economy as a whole. This will grow to 2.5 times more dependent on international markets by the year 2000, he said.

Considering that predication, Glickman lashed out at GOP President hopeful Pat Buchanan's plan to cancel the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and North American Free Trade Agreement. Given the importance of trade to agriculture, Glickman pronounced such a move would be a "dagger in the heart" of rural America.

"The movement toward free trade must continue," Glickman said. "And the scapegoats of those who want to build a wall around our country must be rejected. Isolationism reverts America to a lower standard of living and fewer jobs for people in this country."
Consider frost seeding clover in wheat

While including wheat in a typical corn-soybean rotation boosted overall yields and net profit per acre, corn yields on fields frost seeded with clover averaged 146 bushels, compared to 122 bushels on fields without a cover crop in 1994. His bottom line conclusion: "Farms raising corn, soya-beans and wheat in the rotation had higher corn yields and lower variable costs. They made more profit," his report concluded. 

Harwood, CS Mott Foundation Chair of Sustainable Agriculture in the department of Crop and Soil Sciences, has conducted trials on 15 different Michigan farms testing the impact of wheat and frost seeded clover on subsequent crops, and the results have been pretty impressive. While including wheat in a typical corn-soybean rotation boosted overall yields and net profit per acre, corn yields on fields frost seeded with clover averaged 146 bushels, compared to 122 bushels on fields without a cover crop in 1994. His bottom line conclusion: "Farms raising corn, soybeans and wheat in the rotation had higher corn yields and lower variable costs. They made more profit," his report concluded.

Harwood says that if the clover is killed early enough in the spring to prevent soil moisture depletion, corn will nearly always yield more following a clover rotation than following corn. Red clover is preferred, advises Hardwood, since it's the easiest to establish and the hardest of the clovers.

For best results, Harwood recommends broadcast seeding red clover at the rate of 10 to 15 pounds per acre, sometime in early March. Clover should be broadcast separately from urea since the seed won't throw as far as urea, or else double spread to avoid skips. One limitation, however, is that 2,4-D herbicide cannot be used following frost seeding.

Harwood says that clover is highly resistant to wheat harvest traffic; however, the wheat straw should be baled to allow maximum clover growth. He says that several growers then move or clip the clover in September to hay, to remove summer annual weeds and to set the clover back for maximum fall growth without flowering.

Research data in 1993-94 suggests that clipping clover without removing the hay can result in heavy nitrogen leaching, with as much as 40 pounds per acre lost. Harwood attributes the leaching to mineralization of the clipped clover tops in September.

Consequently, Hardwood advises producers to wait until mid to late October to kill the clover with an application of Roundup. Killing the clover any earlier will result in heavy nitrogen losses through decomposition and denitrification. •

This field of red clover in wheat stubble was frost seeded in early March at the rate of 10 pounds per acre on the Phil and Nolan Hall Farm in Ingham County. Extension Technician Gary Zehr (standing) and Jack Knorek, former MSU County Extension agent, inspect the growth of the clover in early August.

Auxein Corporation and the J.R. Simplot Company to develop novel agricultural products

Auxein Corporation announced Feb. 26, 1996, the formation of a strategic alliance with the J.R. Simplot Company, to continue commercial product development of auxinone plant growth formulations from Auxein Corporation. Auxinones represent a new class of proprietary products that enhance plant growth and productivity through improved nutrient uptake and use by the plant.

The Simplot Company and Auxein Corporation alliance will focus on the continued development of product formulations and product evaluations in field trials performed on agricultural crops. Upon commercialization of the auxinone products, the Simplot Company will have exclusive rights for product distribution in the Western U.S. agricultural markets. Initial target markets for Simplot include auxinones for the potato, cotton and tomato industries.

"This alliance is key to Auxein's strategy for commercial product development and will help launch market introductions of Auxein products," said Dr. John McIntyre, president and CEO of Auxein Corporation. "This is an opportunity for Simplot Minerals and Chemicals Group to work with a company that shares our philosophy to develop and market a new generation of environmentally-safe products for agriculture," stated Larry Hinderager, president, Minerals and Chemical group.

Active ingredients in the formulations are naturally-occurring, present in all life forms and environmentally-safe. Although one of the key ingredients was discovered in plants over 50 years ago, Auxein scientists were the first to discover its function. These products can also reduce the amount of nitrogen fertilizer application, while maintaining crop productivity. The products developed by Auxein represent a significant market opportunity both inside the United States and worldwide.

Auxein Corporation is a Lansing, Mich.-based company that provides new technologies that can be readily integrated into conventional farming methods. Products in commercial development will maintain a level of crop productivity that can ensure a stable food supply for the world's population.

The J.R. Simplot Company is a privately held agricultural company with headquarters in Boise, Idaho. The company has annual sales of more than $2 Billion, derived principally from food processing, fertilizer manufacturing, agriculture, and related businesses. The Minerals and Chemicals Group of Simplot, located in Pocatello, Idaho, will be responsible for Simplot's product, development and commercialization activities. Marketing the commercial products will be through Simplot's Plant Health Technologies business unit, located in Boise, Idaho. The first products from this alliance are expected to be launched in 1997.
Weather Outlook

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

WEATHER During February, the monthly mean temperatures were near to below normal, with seasonal totals lagging behind normal totals by a wide margin by month’s end. Lows reached -25 to -30°F at times, with arctic-origin air in place across the Great Lakes region, and ended with spring-like temperatures and thunderstorms in many spots. Precipitation for the month was once again near to below normal in most spots, and above normal across much of the Upper and northwest-

Michigan Weather Summary

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IPM Scout Training set for KBS

IPM Field Crop Scout Training for southwestern Michigan farmers and crop scouts is set for March 21 and 22 at MSU’s Kellogg Biological Station (KBS). Participants in this program will learn about soil fertility, compaction and drainage; how to identify important weed and insect pest species; and how to collect and submit field samples. In addition to receiving the MSU Field Crops Weed Control Guide, they’ll receive a subscription to the 1996 Field Crop Cat Alert. Participants can also receive CCA and RUP credits.

YOU HAVE A LOT OF RESPONSIBILITIES WHEN YOU RUN A FARM. ONE WAY YOU MEET THEM IS TO NEVER QUIT BEFORE THE JOB IS DONE. THAT'S WHY YOU USE PRODUCTS LIKE COUNTER® CR® SYSTEMIC INSECTICIDE-NEMATICIDE IN THE LOCK'n LOAD® CLOSED HANDLING SYSTEM. THE UNIQUE, CONTROLLED-RELEASE FORMULATION OF CR RESULTS IN LONGER-LASTING PROTECTION, GIVING YOU THE MOST EFFECTIVE INSECTICIDE YOU CAN BUY. CR HITS ROOTWORMS HARD AND THEN KEEPS ON HITTING THEM LONG AFTER THE OTHERS HAVE QUIT. MORE THAN ANY OTHER INSECTICIDE, CR IS WHERE YOU NEED IT, WHEN YOU NEED IT. PLUS, CR MAKES THE UNMATCHED POWER OF COUNTER COMPATIBLE WITH ACCENT® EXCEED® AND BEACON®. UNFORTUNATELY, INSECTS WORK JUST AS LONG AND HARD AS YOU. SO MAKE SURE YOUR INSECTICIDE DOESN'T QUIT BEFORE THEY DO.
Although the concept of cranberry production in Michigan has been explored for over four years now, numerous obstacles, including regulatory battles over wetlands, and the huge start-up costs associated with cranberry bed construction, have kept the fledgling industry in its infant stage. That could all change, however, if Michigan cranberry production — Poised for growth?

Tom Bodtke (pictured at left), brother Larry and father Ron Bodtke planted their first five acres of cranberries in 1993. They’re hoping to grow cranberries without the customary flooding and icing of the beds to prevent winter-kill of the cranberry vines (pictured above).

Michigan on equal footing with other states from a regulatory standpoint. Bodtke pointed to a Massachusetts operation that bypassed Michigan to start a cranberry operation in Minnesota.

“When we asked why they didn’t come into Michigan, they said, ‘we didn’t even consider Michigan because of the environmental problems,’ Bodtke explained. "I think the MOA gives us some potential to really work through this thing. If we can’t, we'll look to the West Coast operation, he concluded.

Bodtke, who operates Corner Stone Ag, a blueberry and cash crop operation in Van Buren County — with sons Tom and Larry — completed his first harvest in 1995 from five acres of cranberries planted in 1993. The family operation includes 1,300 acres of corn, 1,300 acres of soybeans and 800 acres of blueberries. Bodtke has been researching and considering how well cranberries will work in their operation.

Bodtke believes the MOA sets the stage to make start-up considerably easier, while also putting cranberries planted in

Ron Bodtke, president of the Michigan Cranberry Council, is counting on a recent Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on Cranberry Production and Environmental Protection between the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to help alleviate the wetland regulatory problems that several would-be cranberry farmers have run into.

Bodtke, who opened Corner Stone Ag in 1984, believes the MOA works for his farm.

"We are looking for so much water with cranberries it's only because of the fall flood, when you harvest, and that's where the per acre investment comes. Bodtke was excited that there was less water per acre on those cranberries than we do on our blueberries."

Roddke speculates that the actual cranberry bed construction has caused a great deal of regulatory anxiety, saying that it probably appears a lot stranger to a regulatory agency when they see topsoil being moved around.

Market Potential

From a market demand perspective, the picture has never looked better. According to Bodtke, cranberry cooperative giant Ocean Spray is actually looking for at least 3,000 acres of additional cranberry production over the next two years. "The indication is they may just open it up for no acre limits for the next several years," he claimed.

Within Michigan, Bodtke says the fresh market will quickly consume current cranberry production. However, larger-scale production increases, he suspects, that in addition to Ocean Spray, Welch's, as well as local wineries, will also be interested in Michigan produced cranberries.

Demand for dried and frozen cranberries, combined with local processing facilities throughout the west side of the state, will also be big factors in expanding production within Michigan. Bodtke says that limited production potential in other areas means opportunity in Michigan.

"New Jersey is pretty well maxed out because of the environmental laws and restrictions on what they can do out there," Bodtke explained. "Massachusetts doesn't have much opportunity for expansion so it's going to come down to Wisconsin, which still has some room for expansion and then Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, and hopefully Michigan."

Cranberry Production

Cranberries prefer a cool climate and acidic soils similar to those used in blueberry production in the west side of the state, as well as various locations in northern Michigan and in the Upper Peninsula. "There is also a necessity for both irrigation and harvesting." At harvest time, usually in October, the beds are flooded with about 14 inches of water to float the cranberries for harvesting. According to Bodtke, the cranberries fall rather easily from the vines once the harvest machine’s paddles create a wave action in the water.

In constructing their cranberry beds, the Bodtkes actually moved the topsoil of an existing blueberry planting, to build a 3 foot deep bed for flooding the cranberry beds at harvest. In the future, Bodtke plans to build the beds 11 feet deep, and rely more on managing drain tiles to help control water levels.

Once Bodtke is completely satisfied that cranberry production will work in their operation, he hopes to increase their acreage from five acres to as many as 100 acres. "We’re testing whether we can overwhelm cranberries without flooding the beds early winter to form a protective ice cap over the cranberry plants to avoid winter kill."

Why the caution? A $15,000 to $25,000 per acre investment in cranberry bed construction is reason enough, cautions Bodtke. "That doesn't even include the cost of the land, that's just the preparation. The plants themselves range somewhere between $1,000 and $7,000 per acre," he explained.

Once the beds are fully matured and at full production, it will take five years, yields typically average 10,000 to 20,000 pounds, although yields as high as 30,000 pounds have been achieved. "It's really going to take five or six years to see what kind of production we're going to get, although we've been pleased thus far," Bodtke concluded.

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Agricultural Products

BASF
Michigan environmental conference slated for April 2

Cranberry Production and Environmental Protection MOA

The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Michigan Department of Agriculture and the Department of Environmental Quality is being hailed by the Michigan Cranberry Council's Executive Director Ron Goldy as a big step in moving the state's cranberry industry from concept to reality. He says getting through the permitting process and into cranberry production should now be less daunting.

"MDA and DEQ have agreed to work together on the MOA, along with MSU Extension and other agencies, to begin a cranberry industry here," Goldy explained. "That's very encouraging because it commits the agencies to helping farmers get using." Goldy believes that there's a considerable amount of acreage that is "previously converted land" that is suitable for cranberry production and could be put into cranberries with a minimal amount of red tape. He encourages producers considering cranberry production to locate the beds in previously converted wetland sites, instead of attempting to get a permit from the state or federal agencies for a single wetland site.

According to the MOA, the MDA and DEQ agree that:

- Permit requirements will be consistent with federal programs regarding construction of cranberry beds and associated facilities. In addition, previously farmed lands are preferred sites for conversion to cranberry production and will be permitted unless other resources would be adversely impacted by the proposed conversion.
- Permits are required for the construction of cranberry beds in natural, undisturbed wetlands. Permit requirements will be consistent with federal programs regarding construction of cranberry beds in natural, undisturbed wetlands, and will weigh the impacts and benefits of the proposed project.
- Permits are not required for the planting, culti-vation, and harvesting of cranberries or for the maintenance of existing structures such as water control structures and the beds themselves, in established operations.

MDA and DEQ also agree to develop Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices, pursuant to the Right to Farm Act for cranberry production in Michigan. These practices will provide technical and regulatory guidelines for the cranberry industry that are both economically viable and environmentally sensitive.

MDA and DEQ will support funding for research, education, and development of cultural practices that address both production needs and environmental management concerns.

While the agreement has generally been well-accepted, at least one person contends the MOA has little merit in a legal environment, calling it totally ineffective. Attorney Dave Haywood, who has represented a producer named Wallace Hugget in an ongoing court battle over the establishment of a cranberry operation in Cheboygan County, claims the MOA has eliminated all of the success gained in court with the Hugget case.

"There's no teeth to it (the MOA) — it's totally unenforceable in terms of having any basis in law," Haywood argues. "This MOA was done out of fear that we were going to end up with some legislation that would make it more difficult for a cranberry farmer. The result, however, is that this MOA takes away everything we've won in circuit court."

As a result of the MOA, Haywood says the state's Attorney General has filed a Motion for Reconsideration in the Cheboygan County Circuit Court case, which had previously ruled that since "farming is an exempt activity, no permit was required."

MDA Director, Dr. Gordon Gayet, however, calls the MOA a major step forward. "This MOA represents an opportunity for agriculture to get into a very important and new crop," Gayet countered. "It makes the cranberry industry a legitimate agricultural operation and it takes them out of the permitting process that we had previously. This gives us a big jump forward on any land that's previously been in agriculture."
Weed management in wheat

Effective weed management is essential for successful winter wheat production according to Michigan State University's Dr. James Kells. In the department of Crop and Soil Sciences, inadequate weed control can lead to significant yield loss and increasing difficulty.

While Cultural and chemical control practices are often combined to achieve adequate weed control, Kells says that there are four times during the growing season when weed control practices can be employed: prior to planting, at planting, in the spring, and following harvest.

High on Kells’ list of recommendations is the establishment of a healthy, vigorous wheat stand which can be extremely competitive with weeds and is the single most important component of weed control strategy in this crop. "Most production practices (seeding rate, fertility, etc.) which increase wheat vigor and yield reduce weed problems," he said.

In many cases, weedy areas in a field are often the result of a poor stand, low seed pH, or some other production problem. It is not uncommon for vigorous stands to eliminate the need for chemical control.

### Spring Weed Control

As with planting practices, production practices in spring that improve wheat yield will also reduce weed problems. Such practices include nitrogen fertilization, direct control, and disease control. In fields where wheat has sustained winter injury, chemical weed control may be more important.

In fields planned to wheat only, Kells said that several selective foliar applied herbicides are available for weed control. The herbicides vary in the weeds controlled and in the safe application window on wheat. Table 1 lists the effectiveness of wheat herbicides commonly found in wheat. Table 1 shows the application timing of wheat herbicides based on crop growth stage. Note that the safe application period varies greatly among the herbicides. Some herbicides can safely be applied in the fall (e.g. Harmony Extra and Buttril), while others should only be applied in spring. All of the herbicides commonly used on wheat can be safely applied between Feeke's stage 3 and 6.

Decisions on the need for a herbicide start with close monitoring of the field. This includes timely identification of weed species in the field. Herbicide selection involves several considerations including weed species, weed size, wheat growth stage, and herbicide cost.

The earlier a weed emerges, the more competitive it will likely be. Tall, winter annual weeds will usually be more competitive with wheat than spring germing weeds and therefore must be treated early to minimize impact on the crop. Annual grass species are generally not a problem in Michigan wheat production.

Weed seeded with a legume presents an entirely different weed management challenge, said Kells. "Very few herbicide options exist for weed control in wheat underseeded with a legume. MCPP can be applied with any legume other than sweet clover. Application should be made at 5 to 6 gallons per acre (gpa) to minimize penetration of the spray down to the legume. This practice improves freedom on the wheat, and weed canopies as a barrier from direct exposure of the legume to the spray."

Buctril can be used for weed control in wheat underseeded with alfalfa. To avoid alfalfa injury, do not treat when air temperatures are expected to exceed 90°F for 3 days following application. Do not apply to wheat seeded with legumes other than alfalfa. Buctril can also be applied in the fall prior to seeding a legume into the wheat. Herbicide application with liquid nitrogen fertilizer

Combining herbicide and nitrogen into a "weed and feed" strategy reduces the number of trips over the field. However, this practice has two main considerations:

- The optimum timing of herbicide and nitrogen often do not overlap and
- Risk of crop injury. Herbicides are often applied to wheat between Feeke's stage 5 and 6. The ideal time for a single spring nitrogen application is early in the spring prior to growth. Therefore, application of all the spring nitrogen at Feeke's stage 5-6 represents a major delay, which can reduce wheat yield. Nitrogen application to control winter annual weeds will minimize the delay in nitrogen timing, but may be too early for spring germinating weeds, cautioned Kells. One solution to this problem is to split the spring nitrogen applications with 1/4 to 1/6 applied in early spring and the remaining nitrogen applied as the herbicide carrier.

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### Table 1 - Weed Response to Herbicides in Small Grains

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F = Poor; F = Fair; G = Good; E = Excellent; N = None; Not enough information to rank.

The above ratings are a relative comparison of herbicide effectiveness; weather conditions greatly influence the herbicide effectiveness, and weed control may be better under favorable conditions or poorer under unfavorable conditions.
Legal trends impacting agriculture

Farmers would be well-advised to follow future farm program details to the letter if they want to avoid the USDA's new "get tough" policy on program violations, advises attorney Dan Haywood. He says that new procedural rules and a "get tough mentality" from federal regulators doesn't allow exceptions to violations, regardless of how big or small.

"The trend here is to get tough, and it puts pressure on local county committees and local office administrators," Haywood explained. "Typically, these people have your friends—but they don't have the latitude anymore to make exceptions."

Haywood, who was the guest speaker at the recent Farm Bureau Council of Presidents' Conference, said that USDA has recently created a National Appeals Division to address appeals on farm programs. He questions, however, just how effective the new division will be.

"They don't have any rules—you don't use court rules—but you don't actually know what the procedure is going to be," Haywood claimed. "The procedure seems to be whatever the administrative law judge decides it will be."

Lack of established procedures, combined with a lack of common sense and differing individual interpretations, applies equally to state regulations and regulators, Haywood said. A former Michigan Department of Natural Resources employee who now specializes in environmental legal cases, Haywood was critical of administrative orders handed down by state regulators, primarily the Department of Environmental Quality.

"The administrative order may have no semblance of authority granted by a statute," Haywood pointed out. "It may be an order that a bureaucrat decided was necessary because they thought it was time that you had. They don’t need a court order just an administrative order to fix you."

Haywood said producers can expect to see common emphasis on environmental issues, most notably, air and water quality regulations outlined under the Air Act’s Section 901. Here again, Haywood, the refrain of the law works to the disadvantage of the producer.

"Section 901 really is one of these sections that give you very little in the way of a definition," Haywood said. "It’s a section that says if a odor is such that it causes or a problem for other property owners, you could have a problem. That could include, for example, a neighbor who wants to leave his windows open in the summer, but doesn’t want it in an animal waste odor sitting through his window."

Haywood was also critical of the amount of fines levied under "administrative fines" and said that farmers are caught right in the middle of being forced to "buy themselves out of a problem that a bureaucrat perceived. He contends that fines are evolving beyond the cost of enforcement to include civil penalties.

"Administrative fines are supposed to be directed at the cost of enforcement — I can tell you they are not, and in fact, I can tell you that quite often they are separated out," Haywood claimed. "The agency will say ‘it costs us a number of thousands of dollars to deal with this problem you created, we want this civil penalty’".

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Continued on page 20
EPA pesticide revocations will adversely impact farmers

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**Purdue University 1995 Yield Trials**

**Northern Sandy Loams, Regular Population**

- **Crow's 490**
  - 196 B.P.A.
  - 24.6% Harvest Moisture
  - 2% SL

- **Crow's 494**
  - 170 B.P.A.
  - 20.1% Harvest Moisture
  - 2% SL

- **Plot Average**
  - 175 B.P.A.
  - 18.9% Harvest Moisture
  - 2% SL

**Central Clay Loams, Regular Population**

- **Crow's 494**
  - 198 B.P.A.
  - 18.4% Harvest Moisture
  - 1% SL

- **Crow's 490**
  - 153 B.P.A.
  - 21.6% Harvest Moisture
  - 7% SL

- **Plot Average**
  - 152 B.P.A.
  - 18.9% Harvest Moisture
  - 2% SL

**Southern Silt Loams, Regular Population**

- **Crow's 490**
  - 157 B.P.A.
  - 21.9% Harvest Moisture
  - 3% SL

- **Plot Average**
  - 141 B.P.A.
  - 20.0% Harvest Moisture
  - 4% SL

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**House farm bill passage paves way for final action**

Continued from front page

agree to, and the House and Senate concur in, will be quickly signed by the president," he said. "I think the president understands that farmers desperately need to make their 1996 cropping decisions."

During House consideration, several amendments were offered to get the farm bill, including ones to phase out the cotton, peanut and sugar programs. Farm Bureau opposed those amendments, which were rejected by the House.

Two key Farm Bureau-backed amendments were added to the bill. They were: an amendment by Rep. Sherwood Boehlert (R-N.Y.), which included conservation reserve program and wetlands reserves program language and incentive payments for soil conservation measures on croplands and wetland operations; and an amendment by Rep. Toby Roth (R-Ill.), which reaffirmed key export and food assistance programs while giving the agriculture secretary broader authority to use all available funds to expand exports.

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Secondly, the South American soybean harvest is just around the corner, which will temper old crop soybean prices. New crop soybeans, however, will need to stay competitive with corn. A price ratio of 2.4 to 2.6, soybeans to corn, is needed to access even. If the ratio goes lower, farmers will likely plant more corn (currently the ratio is 2.35).

Over the next 60 days, at planters starting roll, look for the market to stabilize. It is far too early to be assured that we’re not losing soybean acres.

As for buying pits, the premium for $7.25 November production reflects seasonal volatility and the amount of time remaining in the contract, the risk is too high to warrant purchasing.

Currently, we are going to hold on any first prices. If spring brings a weather rally, we will continue to monitor the option values looking to protect our bottom line.

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Great Lakes Grazing Conference draws huge crowd

Producers attending the recent grazing conference heard from (left to right) Kalamazoo County livestock farmer Matt Wiley; Dr. Ann Clark, from Ontario; John Cockrell, from the University of Wisconsin; and Indiana dairy producer Dave Forgey about the merits of grazing, forage selection and genetic requirements. _— it doesn’t seem like you could lose. But I’ve made that statement for the last three years._

Wiley’s choice of forages is pretty straightforward — he relies on ryegrass, white clover and whatever else grows naturally. He calls the ryegrass/clover mix almost foolproof. “You will always end up with a nice crop, regardless of the weather,” he explained.

John Cockrell, Extension Specialist with University of Wisconsin agrees with Wiley saying that despite the perception, New Zealand producers have nothing over Michigan producers in regards to forage production potential. They do, however, know how to manage their available forages and adjust feeding plans accordingly. “We need to learn how to utilize the forages that we have better,” Cockrell suggested.

_New Zealand producers are constantly walking and measuring their pastures. They know how fast the grass is growing, what’s out there and how much dry matter is going to there. Based on growth today, he knows if he’s going to have enough feed for his cows a month from now — he doesn’t have any surprises._

Cockrell says U.S. producers could also learn a lot from New Zealand producers in terms of how they use their forages.

_“Beware, however. There are many cases where you can save a dollar and end up costing yourself $2!”_

Indiana dairy producer David Forgey contends that U.S. dairy producers need to figure out how they’re going to compete in a global marketplace with New Zealand’s producers who typically receive anywhere from $6 to $8 per ew.

_“We need to realize that we may very well have to produce milk somewhere in the world at $4 or $5!”_ Forgey warned. _“New Zealand now produces 1.5 percent of the world’s milk production, but they control 25 percent of the world’s dairy exports. If other countries can do that, and they will, then that’s the competition that we need to deal with.”_

Forgey, who operates a 150-cow dairy operation in Logansport Ind., converted his traditional dairy operation over to a rotational pasture based dairy operation in 1990. He’s also been busy converting his herd over to a seasonal operation since 1991, but calls the effort very “challenging” with Hickory.

_The results have shown us the out of the many other breeds of cows, especially Jerseys, have shown much more success in getting seasonal than we have been able to achieve in our herd,” Forgey explained. “I have not achieved the kind of success I believe is necessary.”_

Forgey says that although today’s dairy cow can consume large volumes of forages and produce well, the cow isn’t suitable for a seasonal, pasture-based system. He’s working at trying to integrate some genetic traits from New Zealand and possibly Jerseys into his herd to develop a cow better suited for pastures. “It’s a critical issue for those of us who want to maintain a seasonal dairy,” he said.

Dr. Ann Clark from the University of Georgia in Athens advocates learning from some management principles from New Zealand producers. “You’re comparing yourself to people who are very imaginative and very enterprising in the way they resolve their problems. The point is, if you can do it, you can too,” she said.

Forage management and consistent animal performance go hand in hand, says Clark. She recommends under-stocking the paddock with livestock and harvesting the excess artificially to improve consistency. “The buffer against the weather is the amount of hay that you take off mechanically, which can make livestock performance much more predictable,” Clark added.

One other aspect of grazing management, forage selection, needs a great deal more attention and research. According to Clark, legumes such as birdfoot trefoil promise to help revolutionize pasture management. “Birdfoot trefoil had received even a tenth of the effort that’s been devoted to alfalfa in North America, we would have quite a different industry already,” she claimed. “It’s a species that needs a great deal more attention because it’s non-bloating legume and low in lectin.”

If interested you can obtain a copy of the grazing conference proceedings, from Ben Bartlet, U.P. Experimental Station, P.O. Box 158, Chatham, MI 48916. Send check for $5 payable to Michigan State University.

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