

MICHIGAN FARM NEWS

MICHIGAN'S ONLY STATEWIDE FARM NEWSPAPER

MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU



MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU

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Policy debate headlines 77th MFB annual meeting

USDA announces milk market price initiatives

USDA will implement several steps to strengthen farm-level milk prices, which have plummeted 25 to 30 percent in recent months. USDA Secretary Dan Glickman made the announcement during comments to delegates attending the American Farm Bureau annual meeting.

"Milk prices have declined sharply in recent months and dairy producers are very concerned about the future of their industry," Glickman said. "Based on my assessment of the dairy market situation and recent meetings with producer, processor and consumer organizations, I am directing USDA to take several short-term actions to help stabilize farm milk prices."

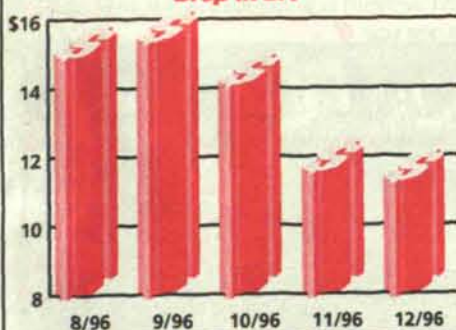
Michigan Farm Bureau Dairy Specialist Kevin Kirk says the announcement is good news to dairy producers who are also facing record-high feed costs, reduced forage supplies and record-low cull cattle prices. "Although it will take several months before the measures can be implemented, these actions announced by USDA will reduce the amount of time producers will have to deal with lower-than-cost-of-production prices," Kirk explained.

Those actions include:

- USDA will purchase \$5 million worth of cheese for use in domestic food assistance programs. This is in addition to the accelerated school lunch purchases already underway. USDA will also explore making additional purchases for other food assistance programs.
- USDA will work with private voluntary groups to increase the flow of dairy products into the international food assistance program.
- USDA will reactivate the Dairy Export Incentive Program (DEIP) for butterfat, which has been idle since mid-1995. USDA is also stepping up DEIP sale activity for non-fat dry milk.
- Beginning this month, USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service will begin collecting data for a national survey of cheddar cheese prices received by manufacturing plants. Glickman

Continued on page 19

Drop in BFP



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The 1996 Michigan Farm Bureau annual meeting attracted national attention for its debate and resulting policy stance on reducing Michigan's deer population. ABC World News Tonight correspondent Ron Claiborne (left) interviews Northwest Michigan Farm Bureau member Bob Gregory at his Cherry Bay Orchards in Suttons Bay about the size and scope of the impact deer have had on his operation.

Michigan's 1996 Young Farmer Achievement Award winner

Diversity is the key to Kerlikowske's success

Diversity is so important in any farm operation," explains Ed Kerlikowske, 28, Michigan Farm Bureau's 1996 Young Farmer Achievement Award winner. "You can't rely on one thing anymore, whether it be market-related or weather-related."

And diversify is exactly what Kerlikowske did as soon as he bought his first 72 acres, taking 13 acres of Welch-contracted Concord grapes to 21 acres by pushing out 35 acres of apples and planting 15 acres of fall-bearing red raspberries. The balance was put into zucchini squash and eggplant production.

"There are two reasons why I went into vegetable production," Kerlikowske says. "Because my father had never done much of that and I wanted to seek my own identity in the community since we've always been known for the grape industry. Secondly I figured I needed something that could generate income immediately. Now the vegetables have turned into a bigger part of the production than some of the fruit production."

"I'm not afraid to take a chance and to fail," states the Berrien Springs young farmer. "I've certainly had failures, but I've had more successes. So don't be afraid to fail and then do as much research as you can about the opportunities; the information is there."

"I've known since I was in middle school I was going to be a farmer," he adds. "I didn't have to struggle going through high school wondering what



Ed and Tina Kerlikowske from Berrien Springs

my occupation was going to be. I just always knew I was going to farm."

Today, if you're reaching into the frozen juice aisle at your local grocery, you could very well be tasting the fruits of Kerlikowske's labor, as his operation has grown to 285 total acres of owned and rented property. "We have 21 acres of grapes, about 100 acres of zucchini, 40 acres of eggplant, 15 acres of red raspberries, and the balance is rotational field corn," notes Kerlikowske.

According to Kerlikowske, the red raspberries are fresh-packed and sold at fruit stands and to a broker, and the rest of them go to the St. Julian Winery to make non-alcoholic sparkling red raspberry juice.

"The vegetables are all packed at our facility

Continued on page 11

COVER STORY

Wildlife crop damage, farmland preservation, increasing the state gas tax and reforming the dairy pricing formula dominated policy debate during the Michigan Farm Bureau annual meeting in Traverse City. While the 450 delegates considered a total of 175 policy recommendations, wildlife crop damage was a major focus of the policy discussion, according to Michigan Farm Bureau Public Affairs Director Al Almy.

In addition to approving a January 1999 deadline for reducing the state's deer herd to 1.3 million before considering a possible class-action lawsuit against the state, delegates also approved numerous measures to help accomplish that objective. "Delegates approved policy calling for extension of the firearm deer season, allowing the use of tree stands during regular firearm deer season, and the establishment of a quota system for each of the state's deer herd management units," Almy said.

While admitting there are serious and honest disagreements between landowners and the Department of Natural Resources on how to best manage the state's deer population, K.L. Cool, director of the DNR, asked that agriculture exercise "kitchen-table diplomacy" in reducing the state's white-tailed deer herd from 2 million to the department's stated objective of 1.3 million deer.

"For the kind of problems we have, the kitchen table is almost always a better forum for resolution than the legislative halls or a judicial chamber," Cool said in comments to the standing-room-only crowd of approximately 300 producers from across Michigan during a wildlife crop damage educational session.

Continued on page 8

INSIDE THIS ISSUE OF THE MICHIGAN FARM NEWS

News in Brief	2	Pollution Prevention II: Be part of the solution	11	Discussion Topic: Some farmers question accuracy of assessments	16
Capitol Corner	3	Weather Outlook	12	Pioneer seed corn plant quietly confident in Constantine	17
Market Outlook	6	Precision Agriculture: Yield monitors glean unexpected lessons	13	Sheep industry loses checkoff	18
Experts join forces to help boost dairy profits	8	Great Lakes Grazing Conference	14	Managing farm costs	20
New Wave Cooperatives increase the bottom line	10	Congratulations to Michigan's Young Farmer Award Winners	15	Sugar beet growers announce sugar contract changes	21

Sell products and services in the Michigan Farm News classifieds—Page 21

News in Brief



From the President

Wildlife crop damage policy — Setting the record straight

More than 450 farmer delegates at the recent Michigan Farm Bureau annual meeting endorsed numerous recommendations for developing wildlife crop damage policy, specifically regarding the state's runaway deer herd population, which currently totals over 2 million head.

While the general media has devoted a great deal of space and criticism to the portion of the policy calling for consideration of a class-action lawsuit against the state of Michigan if the deer herd is not reduced to the Department of Natural Resources stated objective of 1.3 million by Jan. 1, 1999, it has largely ignored the other significant policy recommendations endorsed by delegates to accomplish that 1.3-million-head objective.

Since 1985, the deer population has risen substantially above the Department of Natural Resources' statewide objective of 1.3 million animals. Not only did this increase destroy nearly \$32 million worth of agricultural crops in southern Michigan alone in 1994, it also resulted in 62,535 car/deer accidents in 1995, a 117 percent increase since 1985. Michigan Farm Bureau members have supported policy in each of those 10 years asking the DNR to take aggressive steps to control the deer herd.

At their 1996 annual meeting, Farm Bureau members endorsed a policy that basically draws a line in the sand and says, "Ten years of overpopulation is enough. We will give the DNR two more years to take the necessary action needed to bring the herd down to 1.3 million deer."

Michigan Farm Bureau believes that all wildlife should be managed based on sound scientific principles. Our organization aggressively supported Proposal G, which was approved by Michigan voters in November. This ballot proposal gave the DNR's Natural Resources Commission the ultimate responsibility of sound scientific management of wildlife.

The DNR has at its disposal a number of different options it could implement, such as reducing the size of Deer Management Units (DMUs) to micro-manage overpopulated areas and/or requiring hunters to fill an antlerless permit to be considered eligible for a buck permit. True — Michigan Farm Bureau supported Proposal G, and we still do. All we're asking now is that the DNR accept that responsibility and take action.

Farm Bureau policy recommended numerous measures the DNR could implement, including the following:

- Extension of the firearm deer season, for antlerless only, prior to Nov. 15 and following Nov. 30.
- Liberal issuance of out-of-season block permits at no charge to landowners in overpopulated areas, or to farmers with damage during that year.
- Liberal issuance of out-of-season shooting permits to landowners in overpopulated areas. These permits must allow for the landowner to seek

outside hunters and must, in all cases, allow disposal of the deer at the landowner's discretion.

- Establish population quotas by DMUs. When population exceeds quota by 20 percent, immediate action must be taken by the DNR to decrease population levels in that DMU.
- Limiting baiting of deer from Sept. 15 through the end of the firearm deer season. The Natural Resources Commission should scientifically study the effects of baiting on overpopulation and disease then enact a quantity restriction that will help avoid these problems.
- The use of tree stands for deer hunting during firearm season.
- Any other technique to increase the antlerless harvest.

Finally, if Michigan's white-tailed deer population is not brought down to 1.3 million, Farm Bureau policy calls for answering two questions through a class-action lawsuit. We believe the following two questions must be resolved legally in order to protect agricultural businesses from further economic losses:

- Do private landowners have the legal right to manage overpopulation of wildlife on their land in order to avoid economic losses through destruction of their crops?
- If the DNR continues to limit the number of permits for the taking of deer, while at the same time, from 1986-1996 it managed between 100,000-700,000 deer above its 1.3-million goal, should the state of Michigan be obligated to provide full compensation and/or provide fencing to landowners who are unable to control the deer engaged in the destruction of their crops?

If by Jan. 1, 1999, the deer population is not reduced to the DNR's goal of 1.3 million, Michigan Farm Bureau members asked that their organization evaluate and initiate, if feasible, a class-action lawsuit against the State of Michigan on behalf of farmers suffering economic losses due to the overpopulation of deer.

Farmers have the ability, through a broad range of tools, to control pests — including insects, rodents, and weeds — that have the potential to destroy crops. The objective of pest management is not total annihilation — the goal is managed control. If deer are engaged in the destruction of both harvested and non-harvested crops, Farm Bureau believes farmers should have the ability to control this destructive activity.

Hunter access to farmland can always be improved. Farmers and landowners who rent farmland to farmers need to cooperate by allowing access, if and when possible. However, there are approximately 10 million acres of farmland in Michigan. Assuming all 750,000 hunters would like to hunt on that farmland during the opening week of firearm deer season, there would be one hunter for every 13.3 acres. Put simply, it just isn't feasible for farmers to provide access to everyone.

Hunters also have an obligation to respect property owner requests and rights. Hunters should realize that in order to establish a trophy deer herd, the harvest of antlerless deer must be increased and accepted as a normal population management strategy. The DNR acknowledges that the greatest challenge to controlling the deer herd is encouraging the additional harvest of antlerless deer.

It's our hope that all interested parties will quit playing the blame game and come to the table with their respective recommendations to do what everyone, including the DNR, sportsmen and farmers alike, knows needs to be done — reduce the state's deer herd to 1.3 million through sound scientific management within a reasonable period of time.

Jack Laurie

Jack Laurie, President
Michigan Farm Bureau

P.A. 116 options

The recent amendments to P.A. 116 included a window of opportunity that is available until April 1, 1997. Two options are available until that time:

- Reducing long-term agreements to an additional 7 years.
- Termination of all or a portion of the agreement.

The ability to reduce long-term agreements to an additional seven years is conditional in that the length of the agreement must equal at least 17 years and the contract was entered into prior to April 15, 1994. By reducing the agreement to seven years, an individual has the option to not claim any credits during the last seven years, thus no requirement for payback at the termination of the agreement. At the expiration, the individual may also extend the agreement for an additional period of time, not less than seven years.

There is also an opportunity for early termination between now and April 1, 1997. The early ter-

mination is a one-time opportunity and includes all or a portion of the land under P.A. 116 contract. The owner merely applies for the early termination by letter, providing information on the contract number and the description (including all or a portion of the parcel). The only qualification is that the land was under contract prior to April 15, 1994.

Early termination requires that any credits received in the last seven years be paid back or a lien for that amount will be placed on the property and no interest accrues for this request.

The above options are only available until April 1, 1997. After that date, options for early termination are limited to conditions affecting the property or for public good. Early termination for death or total and permanent disability continue during this time and after the April 1, 1997 deadline.

For more information, contact Ron Nelson, ext. 2043. ■

Small farmers exit hog business

Hog producers overall are cutting back on their operations, despite high hog prices and a hefty drop in corn prices this fall. USDA's new quarterly hog-farm survey shows March-May farrowing intentions of only 97.6 percent, well below trade estimates of 105.2 percent.

While they missed the mark on spring farrowings, they accurately forecast winter farrowings. Their average guess of 100.8 percent matched USDA's 100.7 percent figure. Their estimate of 98.8 percent for September-November farrowings equaled USDA's 98.6 percent figure.

But analysts' projections appear to be off partially because so many hog producers are leaving the business. USDA reports only 157,450 hog operations in its Dec. 1 survey, down 13 percent from a year ago and down 24 percent from two years ago.

Pioneer plans eight Bt corn seed varieties

Seed company Pioneer Hi-Bred International will be offering eight varieties of Bt corn for planting this spring, although quantities will be limited.

The news follows a recent federal clearance for Monsanto to license its Bt technology to Pioneer and at least three other seed companies — Cargill Hybrid Seeds, Dekalb Genetics and Golden Harvest Seeds. ■

Farm income expected to drop in 1997

The Agriculture Department said net farm income likely would drop to \$40 billion in 1997, down from the record \$52 billion this year. The decrease would come from lower grain prices, a department report said.

The department said increased world grain stocks would force cash grain receipts to decline. USDA estimated crop receipts of \$102 billion next year, down from the \$108 billion projected for this year. Livestock receipts will nearly match this year's levels, despite more profit from the beef sector,

which will be leveled by a drop in dairy income. It is expected production expenses will cost American farmers a record \$184 billion next year, up from \$183 billion this year. Production expenses have risen steadily since 1992 and seed, feed, livestock and fuel expenses are expected to lead the way in cost increases next year.

The government outlay to farmers also is expected to decline next year, from \$7.8 billion in direct payments to producers this year, to \$7.6 billion next year. ■

MCIA holds annual meeting

The Michigan Crop Improvement Association (MCIA) and Michigan Foundation Seed Association will be hosting their annual meeting Thursday, Feb. 20, 1997, at the Bavarian Inn Lodge in Frankenmuth.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact the MCIA office at (517) 355-7438. ■

ORGANIZATIONAL BRIEFS

MFB Board elections completed

Following the completion of the 77th Michigan Farm Bureau annual meeting, the Michigan Farm Bureau board of directors elected Tuscola County dairy farmer Jack Laurie to his 11th term as president. Wayne Wood, of Marlette, Sanilac County, was elected vice president, while Jan Vosburg, of Climax, Kalamazoo County, was elected third member of the Executive Committee.

Wayne Wood operates a family farm in partnership with his father, brother and son, raising more than 1,200 acres of crops in addition to milking 300 cows. Wood began his tenure on the Michigan Farm Bureau board of directors as an at-large director in 1985 before being elected as a director representing

District 6 county Farm Bureaus.

Kalamazoo County farmer Jan Vosburg was elected to his first term as third member of the Executive Committee. Vosburg, who serves as an at-large director on the MFB board of directors, operates a 1,600-acre operation in a family partnership raising beef, hogs, corn and seed corn.

New directors elected to Michigan Farm Bureau board positions include Saginaw County cash crop farmer Don Sutto, representing District 8; Sanilac County cash crop farmer Merlann Keinath, representing the state Promotion and Education Committee; and Jeff Horning, of Washtenaw County, representing the state Young Farmer Committee. ■

Tammy Moeggenberg joins Michigan Farm Bureau

Tammy Moeggenberg has joined Michigan Farm Bureau as the new west regional representative.

Tammy is a graduate of Michigan State University where she earned a master's degree in agriculture and Extension education, and a bachelor's degree in animal science. She also holds a certificate in horse manage-

ment from MSU.

Tammy comes to MFB with an employment background that includes Extension, 4-H and FFA. Most recently, she served as program coordinator for the Alachua County Extension Service in Gainesville, Fla. Her responsibilities included planning, developing and implementing horticultural, embryology and environmental education projects. She has extensive experience in 4-H, having served as a program coordinator for Michigan State University's 4-H Youth Programs. ■

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Editorial: Dennis Rudat, Editor and Business Manager; Thomas Nugent, Associate Editor.
Design and Production: Jeffrey Rutzky, Staff Contributor; Sue Stuever Battel.

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Capitol Corner

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

NATIONAL ISSUE

Deferred Payment Contracts

Recently, the Internal Revenue Service took action against a farmer who sold grain under a deferred payment contract. The IRS maintained that when calculating the Alternative Minimum Tax they may owe, the farmer must claim the income in the tax year the deferred payment contract was signed rather than the year in which the income was actually received.

Farm Bureau opposes the IRS action on when income received under the deferred payment contract is treated for income tax purposes. Farmers face wide swings in income due to weather, markets and other factors that are beyond their control. Farmers use deferred payment contracts to balance income fluctuations by selling a commodity in one year and delaying payment until the next year. The IRS action can result in additional tax liabilities for farmers.

Farm Bureau believes the IRS has taken a position that is inconsistent with the intent of Con-

gress and the historical treatment of deferred payment contracts. The tax code specifically allows farmers to use the cash basis method of accounting and farmers have used deferred payment contracts for years without penalty.

Congressman George Nethercutt will introduce legislation when the new 105th Congress convenes to clarify that deferred payment contracts can be used by farmers for both their regular and Alternative Minimum Tax calculations. Michigan Congressman Nick Smith (R-Addison) has cosponsored the bill. A similar bill will be introduced in the Senate. Michigan's U.S. Senator Spencer Abraham has announced he will cosponsor the Senate bill.

Action Needed: Please contact your U.S. Representative and ask him/her to cosponsor the deferred payment contract bill to be introduced by Congressman George Nethercutt.

MFB Contact: Al Almy, ext. 2040. ■

STATE ISSUE

Uniform Condemnation Procedures Act

S.B. 778 amends the Uniform Condemnation Procedures Act. It requires the Michigan Department of Transportation to pay for the entire parcel if the remainder is adversely affected by the purchase of a portion of the parcel. The Department would be given the option to not receive title on the remaining parcel. It also allows the Department to seek a variance if the remaining parcel were nonconforming with local zoning.

In addition, the bill allows the Department access to tax returns and documents pertaining to the assessment of the property in question before entering into negotiations with the property owner. This information must be kept confidential. Finally,

title could not be withheld from the agency unless there was a disagreement over necessity.

An MFB amendment was adopted in the House Transportation Committee to ensure the landowner receives, within 30 days, all the money currently deposited in escrow when there is a court dispute over just compensation. Currently, the landowner must wait until title is transferred or until the time of possession by MDOT to receive the money deposited in escrow.

Status: Public Act 474 of 1996. The bill has immediate effect.

MFB Contact: Tim Goodrich, ext. 2048. ■

STATE ISSUE

Diesel Discount

S.B. 746 revises the motor carrier fuel tax by raising it from 15 cents to 21 cents per gallon. The diesel discount will continue for miles driven in the State of Michigan. In addition it repeals the \$92 per truck diesel fuel sticker fee.

In effect, a commercial trucker will pay 9 cents at the pump and pay an additional amount on their quarterly reports to equal 21 cents. In addition, a credit will be given for the 6 percent sales tax paid on gas purchased in Michigan.

	In-state	Out-of-state
Pay at the pump*	15¢	15¢
Pay on quarterly reports	12¢	12¢
Total before credits	27¢	27¢
Sales tax credit	(6¢)	(6¢)
Discount for miles in MI**	(6¢)	—
Total after credits	15¢	21¢

*per gallon and includes sales tax

**assumes all miles were either in-state or out-of-state

Status: The bill has passed the legislature and the Governor's signature is expected.

MFB Contact: Tim Goodrich, ext. 2048. ■

STATE ISSUE

Subdivision Control Act

Status: Passed the House and Senate on Dec. 12.

- Changes the name of act to "Land Division Act"
- Allows certain land divisions to be exempt from meeting platting requirements (i.e., no review by local government, drain commission, road commission, public health department).

The following land divisions are exempt from meeting the platting requirements:

Division of a parent parcel or parent tract that results in the following (Defines a parent parcel or parent tract as that parcel or tract which is lawfully in existence on the effective date of the amendatory act):

- 4 parcels for the first 10 acres or fraction thereof
- 1 parcel for each whole 10 acres in excess of the first 10 acres, for up to a maximum of 11 additional parcels
- 1 parcel for each whole 40 acres in excess of the first 120 acres
- If the parent parcel is 20 acres or larger, 2 additional parcels are permitted if either of the following occur:

- a new road is established and none of the previous parcels have a driveway access to a previously existing road
- one of the above resulting parcels comprises not less than 60 percent of the area of the parent parcel or parent tract.

Division of all new parcels created after the effective date of the act if all of the following are met:

- at least 10 years have passed since the parcel or tract was recorded
- the division does not result in more than the following number of parcels, whichever is less:
 - 2 parcels for the first 10 acres or fraction thereof and 1 parcel for each additional whole 10 acres
 - 7 parcels or 10 parcels if one of the resulting parcels comprises not less than 60 percent of the area of the parcel or tract being split.

The following land divisions are also exempt (and are not included in the above number of exempt parcels and approval by the local government

is not required):

- Any division which does not create any parcels under 40 acres in size.
- Any division which transfers property from one parcel to another contiguous parcel.

The local unit of government shall approve the above land divisions within 30 days if all the following are met:

- a tentative parcel map is submitted and each parcel has an appropriate legal description
- each parcel less than 10 acres in size has a 4:1 depth to width ratio unless a local ordinance dictates a different depth to width ratio (parcels over 10 acres exempt)
- each parcel does not have a width or area less than required by a local ordinance
- each parcel has access to a public or private road via a driveway or an easement
- if the parcel is a development site:
 - appropriate approval for on-site water supply and sewage disposal
 - adequate easements for public utilities.

Exempt divisions are now "transferable" from a parent parcel to a new parcel. A landowner can pass on the ability to create X-number of divisions exempt from the platting requirements. A statement must be included on the deed to that effect.

All deeds for parcels of unplatted land shall contain the following statement:

This property may be located within the vicinity of farmland or a farm operation. Generally accepted agricultural and management practices which may generate noise, dust, odors and other associated conditions may be used and are protected by the Michigan Right to Farm Act.

Current Law

The following land divisions are exempt from meeting the platting requirements:

- land divisions that do not cumulatively create more than 4 parcels every 10 years, each of which is 10 acres or less in size.

Continued on page 4

Number of "Exempt" Parcels that can be Created — Subdivision Control Act — SB 112 Scenario 1 — land remains as 1 parcel under the same ownership for 20 years.

Parent Parcel size (acres)	CURRENT LAW (4 additional parcels allowed every 10 years)	Initial exempt divisions under SB 112	Redivision of remaining parcel after 10 years	Redivision of remaining parcel after 20 years	TOTAL for 20 year period under SB 112
10	4	4			4
20	5	7	2		9
30	6	8	2	2	12
40	7	9	3	2	14
60	9	11	4	4	19
80	11	13	6	5	24
120	15	17	7	7	31
160	19	18	10	10	38
200	23	19	10	10	39
240	27	20	10	10	40
280	31	21	10	10	41
320	35	22	10	10	42
400	43	24	10	10	44
520	55	27	10	10	47
640	67	30	10	10	50

Lansing Legislative Seminar

Michigan Farm Bureau announces the

1997 Statewide Lansing Legislative Seminar

Wednesday, February 19, 1997
11:00 AM — 6:30 PM
at the Lansing Center

Registration starts at 11:00 AM with lunch at 12:00. There will be four breakout sessions led by the Public Affairs Division staff, the first beginning at 1:45 and the last session ending at 4:30 PM. At 4:30, Farm Bureau members will have the opportunity to greet their legislators and discuss current issues at the legislative reception.



MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU

February 19 • 11AM — 6:30PM

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STATE ISSUE

Subdivision Control Act, continued from page 3

Number of "Exempt" Parcels that can be Created — Subdivision Control Act — SB 112
Scenario 2 — remaining land is divided into 90 acre parcels after 10 years and then each 90-acre parcel is divided 10 years later to maximize number of exempt divisions

Parent Parcel size (acres)	CURRENT LAW (4 additional parcels allowed every 10 years)	Initial exempt divisions under SB 112	Redivision of remaining parcel after 10 years	Redivision of remaining parcel after 20 years	TOTAL for 20 year period under SB 112
240	27	20	10	20	50
280	31	21	10	24	55
320	35	22	10	27	59
400	43	24	10	37	71
520	55	27	10	47	84
640	67	30	10	63	103

NOTE: All calculations using 2 acres as lot size. Two bonus lots allowed under SB 112 are included.

- land divisions that create parcels larger than 10 acres in size
- land divisions which transfer property from one parcel to another contiguous parcel.

Potential Impacts of S.B. 112

S.B. 112 may minimize the rural fragmentation into 10.01 parcels by removing the 10 acre minimum size requirement for parcels to be exempt from platting. However, S.B. 112 may now accelerate the creation of a large number of building sites without an opportunity to consider the full public and community impact of that development.

Rather than minimizing the number of land divisions exempt from the platting requirements, S.B. 112 allows a much larger number of small parcels to be exempt from platting in the future than allowed under current law (10 parcels under S.B. 112 versus 4 parcels under current law). Another bigger loophole has been created which exempts land divisions from meeting the platting requirements. For example, 38 homes could be placed in a compact fashion on a 160 acre parent parcel over 20 years without a full review by local government, health department, drain commission or road commission.

Because of a large number of divisions allowed every 10 years combined with the ability to "transfer" exempt divisions, S.B. 112 could allow for exempt divi-

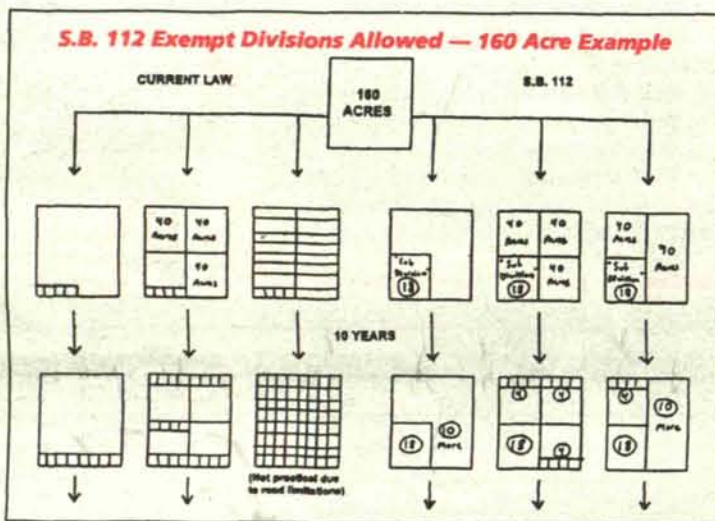
sions to accumulate over time. For example, after splitting one parcel off of a 120 acre parent parcel, the ability to create 16 exempt parcels would remain. In another 10 years, the new remaining parcel would be eligible for another 10 parcels. A development creating 25 home sites could occur without full review by appropriate public agencies.

In addition, while all parcels less than 10 acres in size will have to meet to a 4:1 depth to width ratio, S.B. 112 exempts parcels 10 acres or larger, unless a local zoning ordinance applies. The 10 acre "bowling alley" lots and "jig-saw puzzle" lots prevalent today could still be created under S.B. 112.

MFB position: Michigan Farm Bureau does not support S.B. 112.

Special notes: The bill is on its way to the Governor's desk.

MFB Contact: Scott Everett, ext. 2046. ■



STATE ISSUE

Youth Employment Standards Act (detasseling)

Rep. Oxender introduced HB-5732 on April 23, 1996. The bill was co-sponsored by Representatives Gnodtke and DeLange. The bill was sent to the House Labor committee where it was reported out on Sept. 17, 1996. The bill passed the House on Nov. 13, 1996 on a vote of 66 Yeas and 38 Nays. The bill was sent to the Senate Agriculture and Forestry committee where it was reported out on Dec. 5, 1996. The Senate passed the bill on Dec. 12, 1996 on a vote of 26 Yeas and 11 Nays. The bill has been presented to the Governor and he has 14 days to sign or veto. It is expected the Governor will sign the bill.

The bill expands the hours a minor 16 years or older may be employed in FARMING OPERATIONS INVOLVED IN THE PRODUCTION OF SEED OR IN agricultural processing for greater periods of time than current law allows. The definition of "FARMING OPERATIONS INVOLVED IN THE PRODUC-

TION OF SEED" means farming activities and research involved in the production of seed, including plant detasseling, hand-pollination, roguing or hoeing, and any other similar farming activity required for seed production.

Michigan Farm Bureau supports this bill and testified to the effect that it is consistent with stated Farm Bureau Policy and provides the same youth employment opportunities for seed corn production that were recently made available for other agribusiness.

Farm Bureau Policy #71 — Agricultural Labor relations

Excerpt: We support amendments to the child labor laws which expand the opportunities for employment of young people in agricultural operations.

MFB Contact: Howard Kelly, ext. 2044. ■

STATE ISSUE

Employer/employee vs. landlord/tenant

Recently the Senate Agriculture and Forestry Committee took testimony on the five bill package concerning Employee Rent-Free Housing. Robert DeBruyn, a Farm Bureau member and vegetable grower and processor from Zeeland, was the only person presenting verbal testimony in the Senate Committee. DeBruyn also testified before the House Ag committee at which time Legal Services also testified in opposition to the bills. DeBruyn is the farmer who took the issue of the Employer provider housing to court and won, thus establishing the legal relationship of Employer / Employee vs. Landlord Tenant law. The bills were sponsored by Senator North, chair of the Agriculture and Forestry committee, and Senator McManus. Co-sponsors of the bills include Senators Gast, Gougeon and Schuette. Laws to be amended include the Public Health Code; the Revised Judicature act of 1961; Landlord Tenant act; Truth in renting act and the Michigan consumer protection act.

The bills are:

SB 1158 — EMPLOYEE HOUSING (McManus) Excludes employer's provision of rent-free housing to employees from truth in renting act.

SB 1159 — EMPLOYEE HOUSING (McManus) Exempts employer's provision of rent-free housing to employees from landlord-tenant relationships act.

SB 1160 — EMPLOYEE HOUSING (McManus) Clarifies availability of summary proceedings to recover possession of premises for employers who provide rent-free housing to employees.

SB 1161 — EMPLOYEE HOUSING (North) Clarifies termination of tenancy rights of employers who provide rent-free housing to employees.

SB 1162 — EMPLOYEE HOUSING (North) Excludes employer's provision of rent-free housing to employees from Michigan consumer protection act.

Status: The bills died in the House on Friday, Dec. 13, 1996, the last day of the 88th Legislature. The bills were reported out of the Senate Ag Committee on Nov. 12, 1996 and passed the Senate on Dec. 3, 1996 on votes of 22 Yeas 13 Nays. On Dec. 5, 1996 the House Ag Committee heard testimony and reported the bills out of Committee. On Thursday, Dec. 12 and into the morning of Friday, Dec. 13, 1996, the bills were still in position for a vote. A number of amendments had been added to S.B. 1160, which was the main bill and a decision was made to pull this bill because it had now reached a point where the decision of the Court of Appeals provided more benefits to the farmer than this bill. The other four bills would state that agricultural employer-provided housing would be exempt from the laws mentioned above.

Our policy remains the same for 1997.

Farm Bureau Policy #72 — Employer-provided housing

Excerpt: State law does not address the relationship existing between an employer and an employee living in housing facilities provided rent-free by the employer.

We support the recent Michigan Supreme Court decision, (DeBruyn vs. Romero #98727) which defines the rights and procedures to be observed when the occupant is no longer an employee.

We will seek and support legislation that specifically addresses employee-occupied housing, either rented or no-charge. We recommend swift eviction (maximum of four days) procedures of unemployed occupants in housing units in licensed migrant labor camps so employer-provided housing can become available for other employees.

MFB Contact: Howard Kelly, ext. 2044. ■



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
WHFB	Benton Harbor	1060		12:15 pm
WKJF	Cadillac	1370	5:45 am	11:10 am
WKYO	Caro	1360	6:15 am	12:10-1:00 pm
WTVB	Coldwater	1590	5:45 am	12:00-1:00 pm
WDOW	Dowagiac	1440	6:05 am	12:15 pm
WGHN AM	Grand Haven	1370	5:45 am	12:15 pm
WGHN FM	Grand Haven	92.1	5:45 am	12:15 pm
WPLB	Greenville	1380	6:15 am	11:50 am
WBCH	Hastings	1220	6:15 am	12:30 pm
WCSR	Hillsdale	1340	6:45 am	12:45 pm
WHTC	Holland	1450		12:15 pm
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
WSJ	St. Johns	1580	6:15 am	12:05-1:05 pm
WMLM	St. Louis	1520	6:05 am	12:20 pm
WSGW	Saginaw	790	5:55 am	11:30-12:30 pm
WMIC	Sandusky	660	6:15 am	12:45 pm
WKJC FM	Tawas City	104.7		12:40 pm
WLKM	Three Rivers	1510	5:45 am	12:15 pm
WTCM	Traverse City	580	5:45 am	11:10 am

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Market Outlook

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



HOGS

The Dec. 1 Hogs and Pigs Report, released Dec. 27, was quite a surprise to the trade as well as myself. Despite good hog prices, dropping corn prices, and low sow slaughter we have been seeing, the report showed continued liquidation versus expansion. It appears that small producers continued to drop out even faster than the larger units were built.

Total hog numbers on Dec. 1, 1996, were down 4 percent compared to Dec. 1995. The breeding inventory was down 3 percent — the smallest Dec. 1 breeding herd on record. Market hog inventory was also reported down, at 96 percent of the previous year.

Hogs over 180 pounds (most of these will have been slaughtered by now) were down 5 percent. Market hogs between 60 and 179 pounds (hogs we will see over the winter) were down 4 percent. And, the under 60 pound hogs (which will supply the market next spring) were down 2 percent. Those numbers should keep us in the mid to high \$50s through that period.

The only thing that kept hog numbers this high was a continuing increase in pigs per litter. The average litter size for June-November farrowings was 8.55 pigs per litter. That was 3 percent higher than 1995 and 4 percent higher than 1994.

Seasonal Commodity Price Trends

Corn	↔
Soybeans	↔
Wheat	↔
Hogs	↑↔
Cattle	↓↔

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

December-February farrowing intentions were reported as 101 percent and March-May intentions at 98 percent of the previous periods. This level of intentions would utilize 84.9 percent of the breeding herd, compared to 83.5 percent last year, and a 5-year average of 85 percent. While this may make this summer's prices a bit lower than last year's, it also indicates that prices next fall will be near last fall's prices.

The number of operations with hogs dropped 13 percent from 1995. Places with over 2,000 hogs accounted for 3 percent of the operations and 51 percent of the inventory. Operations over 5,000 head accounted for 33 percent of the total inventory. Contractees of these larger units accounted for 21 percent of the total U.S. hog inventory.

Michigan breeding numbers were down 11 percent, Indiana held even, Illinois dropped 5 percent, Minnesota's herd was off 2 percent, and Iowa's numbers were down 7 percent. On the plus side were North Carolina up 12 percent, Kansas up 27 percent, Oklahoma up 6 percent, and Colorado up 13 percent.

Watch for forward pricing opportunities, after the sharp increase in futures due to the report — the opportunities look pretty good through June. I would expect to see some further increases in the fall contracts.

CATTLE

The Dec. 1, 7-state Cattle-On-Feed Report showed total inventory up 3 percent from the previous year. November placements were up 18 percent. November marketings were down 3 percent. Starting with the January report we will be able to look at year-to-year changes in feedlots with over a thousand head for the U.S. rather than just the 7-states.

The report is continuing evidence that we will have plenty of cattle from now into spring. And there are enough feeders around for production to be near last year through 1997. However, it will be interesting to see the size of the cutback in the calf crop this spring, my guess is 2-3 percent.

Prices should hold in the mid-\$60s through April. At this point, the market is in line with fundamentals and is not providing any great forward pricing opportunities. While the choice-select spread is narrowing, it appears it will still pay to make sure they are finished.

CORN

The Hog Inventory Report discussed above is not good news for the corn market — for either the remainder of the 1996-97 crop year or the 1997-98 crop year. And a smaller calf crop this spring means less corn fed to cattle in 1997-98 as well. In the Balance Sheet below for corn I lowered 1996-97 feed use 25 million bushels. Check it out with the Jan. 10 USDA report.

It even makes my estimates for 1997-98 look worse. While feed use will still probably increase overall due to increased weights and poultry, it is hard to see how use can come close to keeping up with expected supply increases. If the world as a whole has a good crop, we could see 1994 prices.

The markets continue to tell us that it will not pay to store. If you insist on staying in the market, move to a basis contract. It doesn't handle the risk question, but at least you're not paying storage. Other possibilities are Minimum Price Contracts (MPC) or to sell cash corn now and buy a call before spring.

WHEAT

The rest of the world had a good wheat crop and it is showing up in our prices. While much of the hard winter wheat area had a dry December, it doesn't appear to be in trouble at this point. In my 1997-98 wheat projections (Table 2) I left planted area at near the same levels as a year ago. The USDA will be releasing winter wheat plantings on Jan. 10. Check it out.

Hopefully, no one has any old crop wheat left in storage. Even if the Planted Acreage and Stocks

Reports are bullish, it may not get the market to the point that forward pricing decisions are easy. But it may start a positive trend that weather conditions before harvest could build on.

SOYBEANS

While I realize that soybean prices are down, they are historically still pretty good. And, if you look at column 3 of Table 3, you see a picture much less distressing than the third columns of corn and wheat. Soybean stocks remain tight and are expected to be through 1997-98, as shown below.

The soybean futures are telling you in spades not to be storing cash soybeans. They are telling you that it will cost you 4 cents more than storage costs to carry them until July. If you still have cash soys either on-farm or in commercial storage, consider moving over to a basis contract, a MPC, or selling the soys and buying a call between now and harvest.

EGGS

by Henry Larzelere

Egg prices in December averaged slightly above a year earlier (about 2 cents a dozen). Feed ingredient costs averaged about 3 cents per dozen eggs below December 1995.

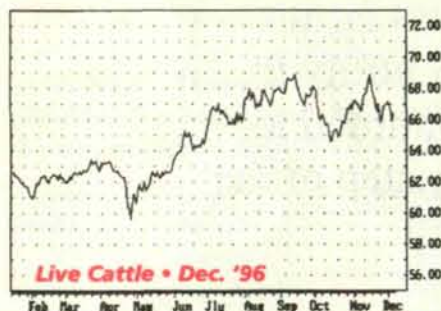
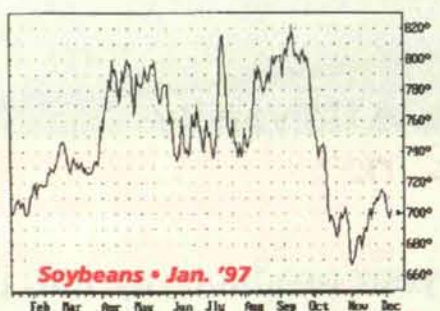
Wholesale prices in New York for Grade A large white eggs in cartons are likely to average in the 90s during the first quarter of the 1997 calendar year.

The demand for eggs remains stable. Prices are quite favorable in spite of the fact that the number of hens and pullets on farms on Dec. 1, 1996 was up 2 percent from a year earlier and table egg production was up 3 percent from last year. Production will continue to increase as the egg-type chick hatch was up 8 percent in November from a year earlier and the number of layer type eggs in incubators on Dec. 1 was up 11 percent from Dec. 1, 1995.

While these hatch figures suggest that egg production will not be affected upward until the spring of 1997, the continuing reduced slaughter of spent hens continues the downward trend of several months.

The demand side of table eggs has been stimulated by increases in two competing uses: egg products and exports. ■

COMMODITY PRICE TRENDS



COMMODITY SUPPLY/DEMAND BALANCE SHEETS

Table 1 — Corn

(Million acres)	Estimated 1995-1996	Projected 1996-1997	Hilker 1997-1998
Acres set-aside/diverted	6.2	0.0	0.0
Acres planted	71.2	79.6	81.5
Acres harvested	65.0	73.3	75.0
Bu./harvested acre	113.5	126.5	129.0
Stocks (million bushels)			
Beginning stocks	1,558	426	1,182
Production	7,374	9,265	9,675
Imports	16	11	8
Total supply	8,948	9,702	10,865
Use:			
Feed and residual	4,711	4,950	5,200
Food/seed & ind. uses	1,583	1,670	1,810
Total domestic	6,294	6,620	7,010
Exports	2,228	1,900	2,250
Total use	8,522	8,520	9,260
Ending stocks	426	1,182	1,605
Ending stocks, % of use	5.0	12.3	17.3
Regular loan rate	\$1.89	\$1.89	\$1.89
U.S. season average			
Farm price, \$/bu.	\$3.24	\$2.55	\$2.25

Table 2 — Wheat

(Million acres)	Estimated 1995-1996	Projected 1996-1997	Hilker 1997-1998
Acres set-aside & diverted	5.2	0.0	0.0
Acres planted	69.2	75.6	75.0
Acres harvested	61.0	63.1	65.0
Bu./harvested acre	35.8	36.3	38.0
Stocks (million bushels)			
Beginning stocks	507	376	435
Production	2,182	2,282	2,470
Imports	68	70	65
Total supply	2,757	2,728	2,970
Use:			
Food	884	910	920
Seed	104	108	110
Feed	152	325	270
Total domestic	1,140	1,343	1,300
Exports	1,241	950	1,170
Total use	2,381	2,293	2,470
Ending stocks	376	435	500
Ending stocks, % of use	15.8	19.0	20.2
Regular loan rate	\$2.58	\$2.58	\$2.58
U.S. season average			
Farm price, \$/bu.	\$4.50	\$4.30	\$3.50

Table 3 — Soybeans

(Million acres)	Estimated 1995-1996	Projected 1996-1997	Hilker 1997-1998
Acres planted	62.6	64.3	64.5
Acres harvested	61.6	63.4	63.5
Bu./harvested acre	35.3	37.9	38.0
Stocks (million bushels)			
Beginning stocks	335	183	180
Production	2,176	2,403	2,413
Imports	5	4	7
Total supply	2,516	2,590	2,600
Use:			
Crushings	1,370	1,390	1,400
Exports	851	900	870
Seed, feed & residuals	112	120	120
Total use	2,333	2,410	2,390
Ending stocks	183	180	210
Ending stocks, % of use	7.8	7.5	8.8
Regular loan rate	\$4.92	\$4.97	\$4.97
U.S. season average			
Farm price, \$/bu.	\$6.77	\$6.65	\$6.40

Monsanto Co. to split

The Monsanto Company has announced that it will spin off its chemical division to stockholders and become exclusively a life sciences company, focusing on agriculture, food, and health care markets.

The Monsanto life sciences products are generally herbicides, food ingredients, drugs, and technology products. Monsanto will continue to make Roundup weedkiller and the NutraSweet sugar substitute, even though those products are chemicals. Monsanto also plans to create "nutraceuticals," which are more nutritious foods such as potatoes that absorb less oil and more healthful canola oils.

The chemical operations will become a separate company manufacturing and marketing chemically-based products. The spin-off operations will include nylon fibers, plastics and phosphates. The chemical division accounted for 41 percent of corporate sales last year. ■

Balanced budget backers growing

The likelihood of Congress passing a constitutional amendment to balance the budget is increasing, according to a story recently in USA Today. There's a strong case for Congress approving an amendment in 1997 and that enough state legislatures will ratify it to make it part of the Constitution sometime in 1998. The American Farm Bureau Federation is a strong proponent of the amendment.

Supporters say this year's congressional elections have helped secure a likely two-thirds majority for the amendment in both the House and Senate. Opponents say Republican losses in the House jeopardize the amendment's chances and predict a tight vote.

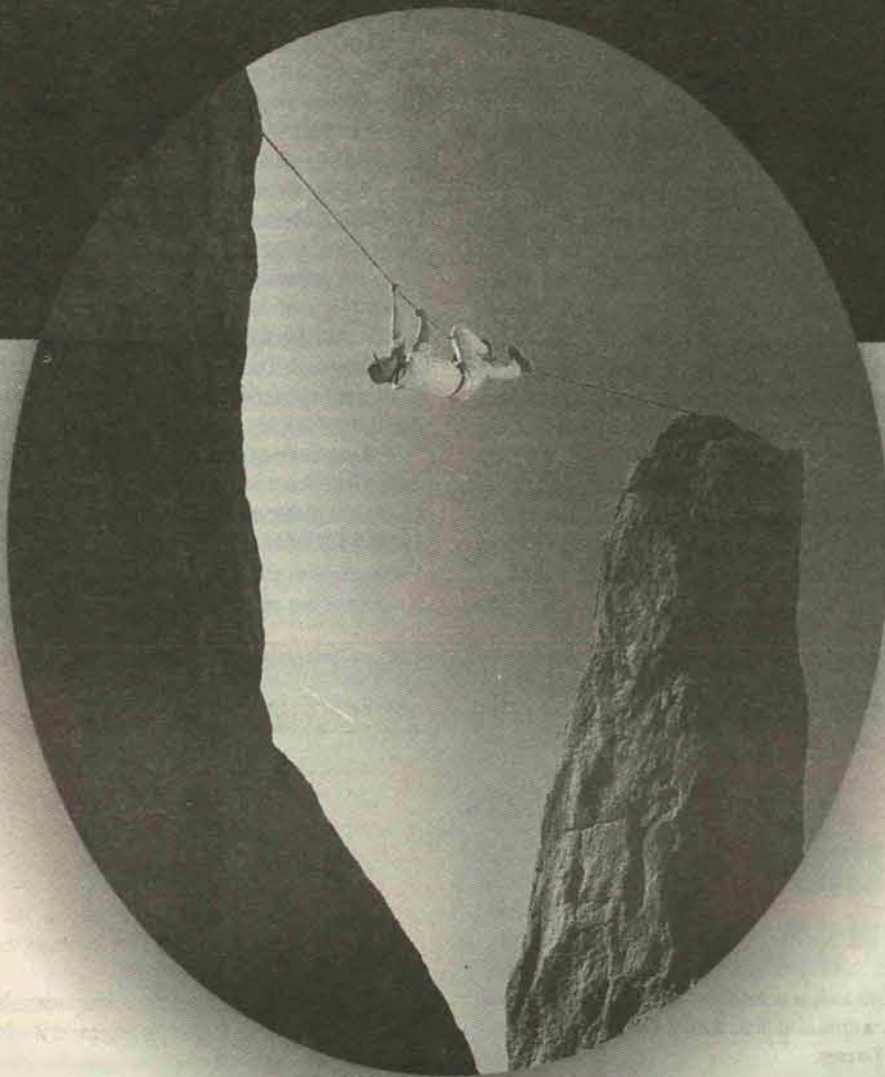
If it passes Congress, the amendment is off to the states, where USA Today predicts it will sail through 25 or more states, leaving the last few as national battlegrounds.

"I think it will pass handily in the states," said Vermont Gov. Howard Dean, who next month becomes chairman of the Democratic Governors Association. "People want a balanced budget amendment. As long as it doesn't do much harm, there's no reason not to pass it. I think even Democratic states will ratify it." ■

Source: Knight Ridder Financial

Source: USDA and Jim Hilker

WHY MORE GROWERS ARE GOING FROM
POINT A TO POINT DK.



1996 Michigan State University
Corn Yield Trials



DK471

4th Place out of 62 hybrids, Monroe County – Early
166.3 bpa @ 17.9%
9th Place out of 50 hybrids, Huron County – Early
157.4 bpa @ 25.6%



NEW!
DK477

1st Place out of 50 hybrids, Huron County – Early
135.5 bpa @ 22.0%
1st Place out of 50 hybrids, Montcalm County – Early
164.4 bpa @ 25.9%



DK493

4th Place out of 49 hybrids, Huron County – Late
127.0 bpa @ 26.7%
8th Place out of 49 hybrids, Montcalm County – Late
166.7 bpa @ 24.0%



DK527

1st Place out of 70 hybrids, Ingham County – Early
161.4 bpa @ 22.6%
2nd Place out of 70 hybrids, Kent County – Early
160.9 bpa @ 20.9%

For complete details, see the Michigan State University 1996 Corn Yield Trials reprinted in this issue of *Michigan Farm News*.



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Experts join forces to help boost dairy profits

Farm Credit Services has joined forces with the Michigan Milk Producers Association (MMPA), AgriSolutions and Michigan State University (MSU) to sponsor a first-of-its-kind state-wide conference for dairy producers dedicated solely to learning how to improve profits. Dairy Profit U., a one-day conference at MSU's Kellogg Center Feb. 26, will focus on educating farmers about challenges the dairy industry can expect to face in the next 10 years, and how to position their operations to respond profitably to those shifts and changes.

Dairy industry experts from across the Midwest will present timely, insightful information farmers can use now to start preparing their operations for increased profits. Following is a list of speakers and topics:

Dr. Ken Bailey of the University of Missouri and formerly with the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute will examine "Dairy Outlook for the Next 10 Years."

Dr. Joe Conlin, University of Minnesota, will speak about "Positioning Your Dairy Farm for the Future."

Dr. Roger Palmer, senior management consultant for Purina Mills Co., will explain "How Consultants Add Value and Improve Dairy Farm Profitability."

Michigan State University's Dr. David Beede will highlight "MSU Programs for Improving Dairy

Farm Profitability."

A panel of Michigan and Wisconsin dairy farmers will discuss "How We Are Positioning Our Dairy Farm Business for the Future." Panel members are Cathy Webster, of Elsie; Carl Theunis, Kaukauna, Wis.; and Deanna Stamp, of Marlette.

Dr. Terry Smith, University of Wisconsin professor of dairy science, Center for Dairy Profitability, and national dairy specialist with AgriSolutions, will outline "Benchmarking Your Farm's Performance."

Andy Berry, national sales manager at AgriSolutions, will present "Financial Planning, Programs and Training — Curriculum Planning."

Keynote speaker Dr. David Kohl, of Virginia Tech's Department of Agricultural Economics, will examine "The Dairy Industry — Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow."

"As hard-hitting as this agenda is, the biggest advantage Dairy Profit U. offers dairy farmers is the opportunity for continuing education and access to industry experts' advice and consultation," said Berry of AgriSolutions. AgriSolutions, an agricultural consulting company dedicated to helping farmers optimize their profits, will present farmers with ways to solve the profit riddle and to turn the ideas presented at Dairy Profit U. into reality for their individual operations. The company's consulting, software and information access systems offer farm-

ers excellent opportunities with which to direct their operations into the next century.

MMPA and Farm Credit Services will sponsor scholarships for their member farmers to attend Dairy Profit U. The cost to attend Dairy Profit U. is \$125 for the first member of each farm; the fee for a second farm member is \$50. MMPA and FCS will provide a \$100 scholarship for the primary member and a \$25 scholarship for the secondary member so each only pays \$25 to attend. Interested dairy farmers should register by Jan. 31, either by completing the form attached to the brochure mailed in early January or by calling Michigan Milk Producers Association at (800) 572-5824. Attendance at Dairy Profit U. is limited, so it is best to register early.

"MMPA, AgriSolutions, Farm Credit Services and MSU have committed themselves to communicating to milk producers the importance of adapting their dairy operations to the changing face of the industry," said Bill Henquinet, senior vice president of administration at Farm Credit Services of Michigan's Heartland. "Dairy Profit U. represents an excellent opportunity for farmers to tap into the information that will help them make those adjustments."

If you have any questions about Dairy Profit U. or about how it will benefit your operation, please call John Dillard at MMPA at (800) 572-5824. ■

Policy debate headlines 77th MFB annual meeting

Continued from front page

Cool suggested that landowners, hunters, the DNR and concerned organizations work together to successfully manage Michigan's white-tailed deer population. "It won't be done today, it won't be done tomorrow and it won't be done next week," he said, noting that farmers know a great deal about animal management that could be translated to deer management.

"If you can apply that knowledge with us in a scientific way, then we can have fewer deer, greater success, more people harvesting bucks and less of an impact on your operation," Cool urged.

According to Ed Langanau, wildlife big game specialist for the DNR, one of the biggest obstacles to reducing the deer population lies in convincing sportsmen to harvest more does during the firearm deer season.

"Big buck mentality is largely responsible for the herd increases we've experienced," Langanau said. "We're simply not taking advantage of the deer herd we have in this state. As a result, the size and the body weight of the deer herd is dropping due to the increasing deer herd."

Preliminary figures from the 1996 firearm season show that only 50 percent of the state's hunters applied for an antlerless permit. Out of the 279,000 deer harvested during regular firearm season, only 102,000 does were taken compared to 177,000 bucks, according to George Burgoyne, chief of the DNR's wildlife division.

"One of the most significant tools to deer herd control is the taking of antlerless deer during the regular firearm deer season," Burgoyne said. "We also need to go beyond the normal opportunities that we currently have available to help address the crop and forestry damage being caused."

"If all of the interested parties would participate — the farmers, sportsmen, conservation clubs — we can get the job done. We may argue the numbers, but I think they know there is a problem with wildlife crop damage," said Michigan Farm Bureau President Jack Laurie. "It's not a matter of whether you're for or against deer, it's an economic issue."

Laurie said that Farm Bureau will continue to hold the DNR accountable in following through on their good-faith offer to do things beyond the ordinary in reducing the size of the current herd. "Farmers also need to follow through on good-faith offers and do things cooperatively, such as allowing people access to their farmland to hunt," Laurie said.

Delegates take action on a host of other issues

Delegates also endorsed a 7-cent increase in the gas tax to raise revenue for dealing with the state's rapidly deteriorating road infrastructure and supported continuation of the current distribution formula. Almy expects the gas tax issue to be a priority in the next Legislature.

"At this point the Legislature has recessed for the year and will not reconvene until mid-January 1997, so obviously nothing will happen until then," Almy advised. "I think there will be considerable discussion of this issue by the next Legislature, but I would not predict much likelihood of legislation being passed to increase the gas tax until at least mid-1997 at the earliest."

Farm Bureau members also endorsed numerous farmland preservation measures, including legislation that would allow local units of government to create agricultural security areas and revisions to the Farmland Open Space Act, or P.A. 116. According to Almy, policy recommendations for P.A. 116 would enhance the financial rewards to producers with farmland enrolled in the program by changing the formula for refunds from property taxes exceeding 7 percent of their household income to property taxes exceeding just 3.5 percent of their household income.

"This would provide additional financial incentives to producers whose tax burdens have been lowered by the enactment of Proposal A, which reduced property taxes to 6 mills for school operating purposes," Almy explained.

The formula used for determining the price of milk was the subject of lengthy debate as well. Many farmers were upset over the profound impact the cheese market has on their milk check and to consumer prices. Delegates voted to decouple Class I and Class II products (fluid milk, yogurt, butter) from Class III and Class IV products (cheese and milk powder) to reduce wide swings in milk prices. Delegates ultimately went on record supporting the federal order reorganization. ■

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Precision Agriculture

by Neil R. Miller

Yield monitors will only pay for themselves when they are used as tools to improve crop management. In my June 15 column I listed several management issues that can be ex-

Prices drop during fourth quarter of Marketbasket Survey

Consumers got a break at the supermarket line during the fourth quarter of 1996, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation's latest informal survey of retail food prices. Farm Bureau's Marketbasket Survey showed a 52 cent drop in selected grocery items during the fourth quarter.

Americans paid \$32.27 for 16 select items on the survey during the fourth quarter, down from the third quarter's \$32.79 figure. It marked the first decrease of the year as food prices inched higher during the first three quarters. The cost of Farm Bureau's marketbasket is \$1.96 higher than a year ago.

While pork products were a big factor in price increases earlier in the year, they also contributed to the drop during the fourth quarter. A pound of bacon, which jumped 68 cents during the first three quarters, dropped 23 cents this quarter. Shoppers paid \$2.34 a pound for bacon this quarter, compared to \$2.57 during the third quarter. A pound of pork chops cost \$3.27, down 9 cents.

Ken Nye, director of Michigan Farm Bureau's commodity and environmental division, isn't surprised by the downtrend in bacon prices which normally fall this time of year. "Bacon is still somewhat of a season product," said Nye. "It is a summer-demand product. The high demand for bacon is still for sandwiches. We are out of the bacon, lettuce and tomato season."

Nye said the trend is changing somewhat with fast-food restaurants such as McDonald's and Burger King adding bacon to many of their popular items.

Of the 16 items surveyed nationwide, seven jumped in price from the third quarter. Following a trend of the past year, dairy prices increased during the fourth quarter. A pound of cheddar cheese increased 22 cents to \$3.21. A gallon of whole milk, which jumped 13 cents during the third quarter, slowed down a little this survey with a 4-cent increase to \$2.58.

The higher milk and cheese prices partially reflect increased grain prices farmers had to pay during the past year. Other increases included ground chuck, \$1.66 per pound, up 12 cents; mayonnaise, \$2.56 per 32-ounce jar, up 12 cents; sirloin tip roast, \$2.77 per pound, up 8 cents; eggs, \$1.10 per dozen, up 4 cents; and cereal, \$2.62 per 10-ounce box, up 1 cent.

A five-pound bag of flour represented the sharpest price decrease during the fourth quarter, dropping 27 cents to \$1.17. Other decreases included Russet Potatoes, \$1.53 per 5-pound bag, down 24 cents; apples, 92 cents per pound, down 18 cents; whole fryers, 91 cents per pound, down 6 cents; white bread, \$1.09 per 20-ounce loaf, down 6 cents; corn oil, \$2.36 per 32-ounce jar, down 6 cents; and vegetable oil, \$2.17 per 32-ounce jar, down 6 cents.

American Farm Bureau, the nation's largest general farm organization, conducts its informal quarterly marketbasket survey to help track retail food prices to ensure they are in line with prices received by the nation's farmers and ranchers.

While grocery prices have gradually increased throughout the year, the farmers' and ranchers' share remains steady. The farm value of each food dollar spent in the United States is approximately 22 cents. Labor, at 35 cents, is the largest component of the consumers' food dollar.

Volunteer shoppers from 35 states participated in this latest survey in mid-November. Even with the 62-cent drop, the \$32.27 figure represents the second highest average since the survey started in 1989. The third quarter average this year was \$32.79.

Yield monitors glean unexpected lessons

amed with yield monitors. These included soil drainage, compaction, tillage, weed management, variety performance, fertility, compensation, etc. This year, five of my farmer clients had yield monitors and GPS in their combines. As I have begun to review results with them, my list of management issues continues to grow. Here are some of the unexpected lessons we gleaned in 1996:

Impact of deer populations. While farmers in several areas of the state put pressure on legislators to reduce deer populations, those with yield monitors can produce convincing evidence of their impact. A client recently asked me to analyze the yield loss on several rented fields in order to convince his landlord that there was a problem (Figure 1). The landlord approached the DNR, and with the evidence of the maps, requested a damage permit to allow him to reduce the deer population.

Herbicide injury. Farmers often ask me how much effect postemergence soybean herbicides have on final yield. After seeing evidence of this damage in yield maps, my retrospective answer for 1996 is more than we would have liked! This year's relatively short growing season increased the potential for yield loss from herbicides which burn foliage and set back plants. As we continue to document this phenomenon in different years and environ-

ments, we will have a much better sense of when herbicide resprays are appropriate.

Hedgerow competition under no-till. One client who began yield monitoring in 1995 noticed evidence of much greater competition from hedgerows in his 1996 yield maps. The difference was most notable in fields that had not been tilled for more than 5 years. Since moisture was more limiting in 1996, he attributed this phenomenon to competition from undisturbed roots growing out from the hedgerows. He consequently chisel plowed the affected areas while leaving the remainder in no-till.

Knowledge is power in today's world. Those who learn from lessons such as those described above will be among the best managers, and most profitable farmers of the future. Yet many of the lessons from this season will not be fully understood until we have multiple years of data to compare. For this reason, if you have invested in a yield monitor, take care to store your data on a permanent, electronic medium for future access. Paper maps are of limited use in multiple year analysis. Computer hard disks can crash, and floppy disks deteriorate with time. If you don't already have a good system for permanent data storage, I'll be happy to suggest some options. The data you generate is your ticket to the information age!

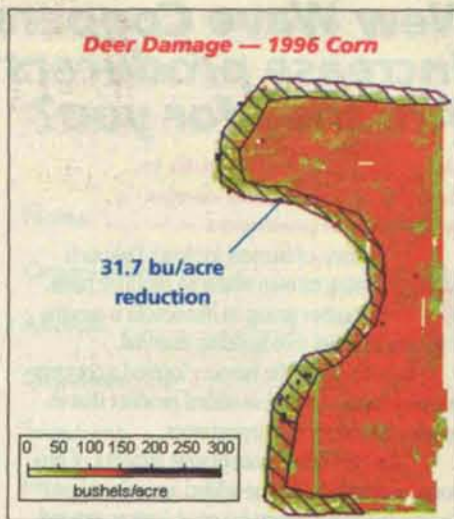


Figure 1 — This yield map, documenting damage in a corn field, prompted the landlord to take measures to reduce the local deer population.

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Responsible Like You

New Wave Cooperatives increase producers' bottom lines — Are they for you?

Workshop at Frankenmuth to focus on value-added co-ops for Michigan producers

A group of farmers in North Dakota is using its own wheat to produce pasta. Another group in Minnesota is turning soybeans it grows into building material.

In both cases, the farmers formed a cooperative that turns out a value-added product that increases their return on investment.

"The New-Wave Cooperative concept of producer ownership of value-added agricultural processing facilities is a way for producers to expand their income potential beyond the farm gate by channeling processing profits back to the farm," explains Michigan Farm Bureau Commodity Specialist Bob Boehm. "The number of new-wave cooperatives has increased dramatically in the northern plains area and particularly in the Minnesota/North Dakota region with over 22 value-added ventures formed in the last several years."

"These new cooperatives put the farmer in control of what is taken from the farm and placed before the consumer," says Jim LeCureux, Michigan State University Extension agricultural agent. "This enables the grower to retain a greater share of the retail value of the product and helps create greater

prosperity in the community."

How value-added cooperatives operate and to what extent Michigan producers can benefit from being a part of an organization that deals more directly with the consumer will be discussed Jan. 20 at the Value-Added Conference in Frankenmuth.

The conference will focus on what constitutes a value-added cooperative, how it functions, how well cooperatives are working in Minnesota and North Dakota, and how a cooperative can be financed and operated.

"The original model for all of these ventures is the American Crystal Sugar Company which was purchased by area sugar beet growers in the early 1970s," says Boehm. "The organization has been very successful, continuing to expand with the recent completion of the \$261 million producer-owned Pro-Gold corn sweetener facility."

The conference will cost \$25 if registration is made by Jan. 10. Registration the day of the conference will be \$30. Early registration can be made by calling Michigan Farm Bureau at 800-292-2680.

More information about value-added cooperatives can be obtained from LeCureux at 517-269-6099.

The conference is being sponsored by MSU Extension, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Michigan Farm Bureau. ■

Renaissance zones could attract value-added processors to central Michigan

In an attempt to revitalize the economies of several areas of Michigan, Gov. John Engler recently designated several sites across the state as renaissance zones. While this designation brings about tax breaks that may attract new businesses and boost prosperity in the zones, it's a special plus for Gratiot and Montcalm counties. Farmers and other citizens in these two counties are hoping the new development will attract agricultural processors to their area.

Engler announced the creation of the 11, virtually tax-free, renaissance zones Dec. 16. The designation could mean hundreds of new jobs and new businesses in those 11 areas.

Incentives to attract businesses

Residents and businesses will be exempt from all state and local taxes, except sales tax and local school debt millage. The state will reimburse school districts for any lost revenues. Renaissance zone designation provides tax breaks for 10 to 15 years, depending on the zone. The tax-free status began Jan. 1, and will be gradually phased in again toward the end of the period.

"These renaissance zones are unique in the nation," said Bob Craig, director of agriculture policy and special projects for the Michigan Department of Agriculture. "They are essentially tax-free from all state and local taxes. No place else in the country has that kind of financial incentive."

To spread the word about the renaissance zones to potential local businesses, the Michigan Jobs Com-

mission will spend \$450,000 in the next six months promoting the zones throughout the United States. **Zones could benefit Michigan agriculture**

The renaissance zone designations are especially important to the agricultural industry, and even more to that of Gratiot and Montcalm counties. Members of a coalition in that area, who studied the possibility of a zone since last summer, centered their zone proposal on bringing value-added agricultural processing to the counties.

The Gratiot/Montcalm renaissance zone is comprised of six sites in Montcalm and Gratiot counties, totaling 1,870 acres. While the largest single site is about 700 acres near Ithaca, other large sites exist near Carson City, Stanton and Howard City.

Experts say renaissance zones could be the strong push processors need to make their way into Michigan. According to Craig, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and MSU Extension have agreed to help bring such businesses into Gratiot and Montcalm counties. "In addition to having the same tax-free status that the other zones have, in their renaissance zone plan they specifically targeted ag and food processors," Craig said, noting that the area would be a prime location for such processing. "It not only has ag, but it's got utilities — water, sewer, electric — and good potential for transportation. If you're going to get a company there, they're going to need utilities." ■

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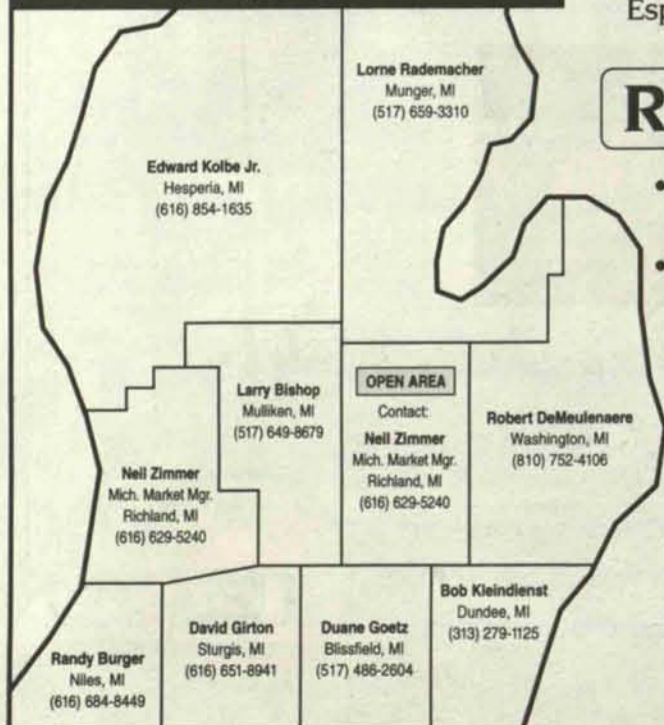
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SECOND ANNUAL
Agricultural Pollution Prevention Conference



The agricultural community receives too little attention for its efforts to prevent pollution. Private initiatives are flourishing in every quarter: individual farmers, cooperatives, producer groups, food processors and chemical manufacturers. In the future, the private sector is likely to be a more critical player in the battle to prevent agricultural pollution.

Michigan agriculture is a leader with a progressive attitude toward stewardship and a collective responsibility to the environment. While the industry acknowledges its responsibility for pollution prevention, it also recognizes that there are others who must participate to achieve environmental goals.

This conference will feature pollution prevention ideas from Michigan farmers and will include presentations from producers from other states and Canada. Conference organizers hope to generate ideas for new agricultural pollution prevention initiatives in Michigan and establish a better understanding of what works or has not worked in neighboring states and Canada.

standing of what works or has not worked in neighboring states and Canada.

Participants should be prepared to contribute as well as listen. This conference will challenge participants to be part of the solution. Participants will be asked to consider how the private sector can play a more important role. Conference organizers hope to generate ideas that will result in strategies to increase support for voluntary action in Michigan.

Many can benefit

Public officials and others can learn how the private sector is making a difference. This conference will stimulate ideas about partnership-building that can leverage limited funds to produce higher public dividends. Producer groups and agribusinesses who want to be proactive can learn from the successes of others. Those concerned about the environment can discover the contributions of the private sector and find common ground to achieve new levels of environmental protection through cooperation. Farmers can learn lessons from innovators in the field. ■

Michigan's 1996 Young Farmer Achievement Award winner

Continued from front page

and marketed through a broker to the fresh market," he says. "We shipped as far as from the very tip of Florida to right into the East Coast and all over."

Challenges of a young farmer today

Ed and his wife of six years, Tina, have faced many challenges in making their operation successful. Both agree that land availability will play an important role in the future growth of their business.

"We're under pressure from development of housing," Ed illustrates. "It seems like everybody from the city wants a five-acre piece of property that's a scenic view where they can put their \$250,000 house and call it home."

"If he sees something that wasn't farmed last year or during the season," Tina notes, "he'll go find the owner and ask him what he's doing with it, if he'd like to rent it out or maybe even sell it. It's a pretty big issue. We know quite a few people around here — if land comes available, it's taken up just like that."

Advice for young farmers

"One thing I guarantee is that I hope I never lose the ability to listen to my elders," he says. "I've gained more knowledge from them than I did through four years of college or anything else or any book they can possibly give you. It makes me upset to see some of the young farmers just looking at the older farmers as obstacles when they should be gleaning years and years of experience they've had from them."

"The biggest thing is to start slow, start at a crawl, and then eventually get a little base underneath yourself," Kerlikowske suggests.

"If you have no family background or a person that you can glean information off," he advises, "I would probably recommend going to work for an operation that deals in what you would like to do. If you're going to go into fruit production or vegetable or dairy, whatever it may be, you can gain invaluable knowledge from ground level."

"I've got a four-year degree in horticulture," Ed adds. "At first I really didn't know how much that was going to help what I was doing on a day-to-day basis, but it's helped tremendously."

What about the future?

"Although the American farmer of today is the most technologically advanced that's ever been in history and is producing far more than they ever have before, we still teeter fairly close to a situation where if we had a couple of bad seasons nationwide, we'd be in a world of hurt."

Ed's wife, Tina, who started working for the Kerlikowske family farm in the roadside stand, intends to continue growing that portion of the business into their retail shop and other markets in the area.

"I want to eventually have kids and grow our own labor," she jokes. "I want to be as involved as possible. I foresee us growing quite a bit. I really enjoy when my husband comes home and says, 'I have a new idea.' It's really exciting — seeing him look into that and asking me what I think. And it feels really good to be involved and to be a part of it." ■

"Prowl lets me worry about things other than spraying my corn again in the summer; it works great all season."

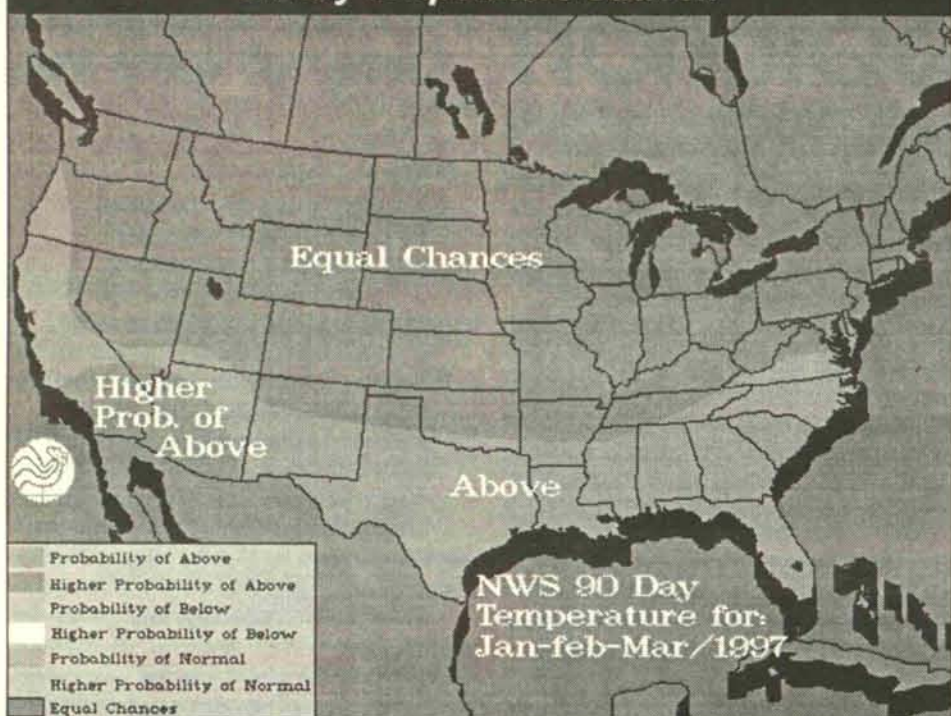
Phillip Potter

Tully, New York

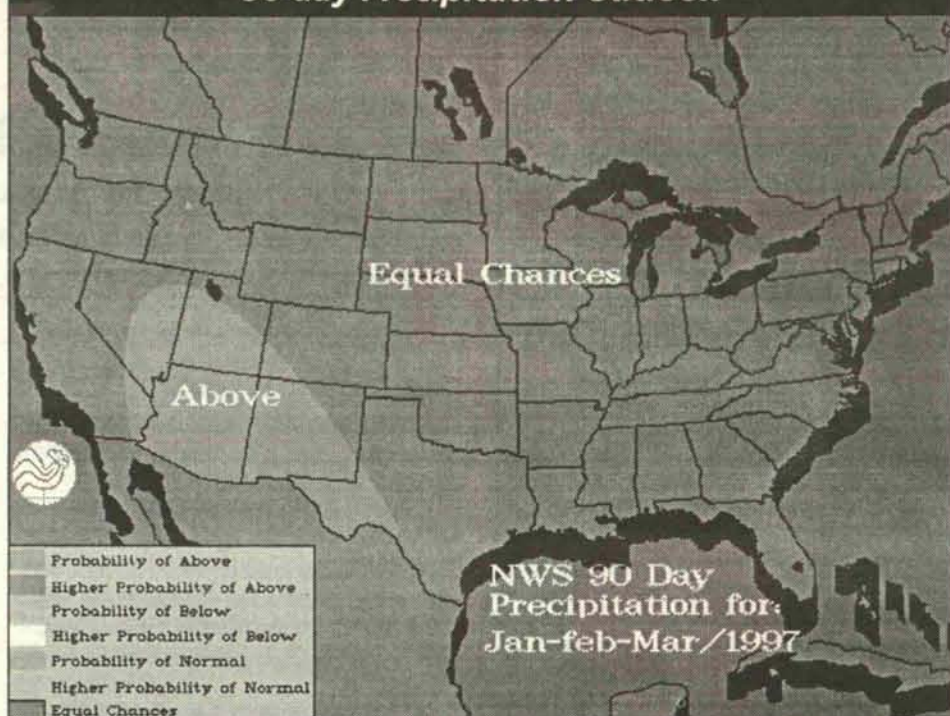


PROWL
 C O R N

90-day Temperature Outlook



90-day Precipitation Outlook



U.S. farm values up

Farmland values rose 7 percent during the past year, according to the Agricultural Statistics Service. American farmland, excluding Hawaii and Alaska, carries an average price of \$890 per acre.

A small sampling of increases among Midwestern, Plains and Mountain states include Iowa, up 6.9 percent to \$1,442 per acre; Wyoming, 7.3 percent, \$206; Nebraska, 6 percent, \$632; South

Dakota, 5.5 percent, \$319; Montana, 4.5 percent, \$289; and Minnesota, 4.2 percent, \$976.

After inflation, U.S. farmland values were up 4.4 percent. ■

Weather Outlook

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

As advertised, a major shift of the jet stream in mid-December from troughing across central sections of North America to a west to east zonal configuration has resulted in mild, spring-like weather during late December and early January. Average temperatures for December included much below normal readings early in the month and much above normal readings late, with monthly means generally showing positive departures of 1-4°F above normal. Much of this positive departure was due to abnormally warm nighttime minimum temperatures, which in turn were associated with cloudier than normal conditions. Precipitation for the month was generally above normal, due mainly to an active storm track across the region.

In contrast to much of the Upper Peninsula where snowfall was heavy (similar to adjacent sections of the northern Great Plains and Upper Midwest where winter conditions so far have been severe), the majority of precipitation across Lower Michigan fell in the form of rain or mixed rain/sleet/snow.

The official NOAA long lead outlook for January and the 90-day January-March period is basically unchanged from last month, calling for near equal probabilities of below-, near-, and above-normal temperatures and precipitation. In other words, climatology. Besides a tendency for warmer than normal temperatures across southern sections of the country and for wetter than normal conditions across sections of the southwest and southern Great Plains, the equal probabilities forecast also applies to much of the remainder of the country. Both statistical and dynamical computer forecast-tools continue to hint at steady warming of the equatorial Pacific region into the coming summer, however, possibly leading to El Niño conditions by this Fall, and even to forecasts of milder than normal temperatures across northern sections of the U.S. for the winter of 1997/98. ■

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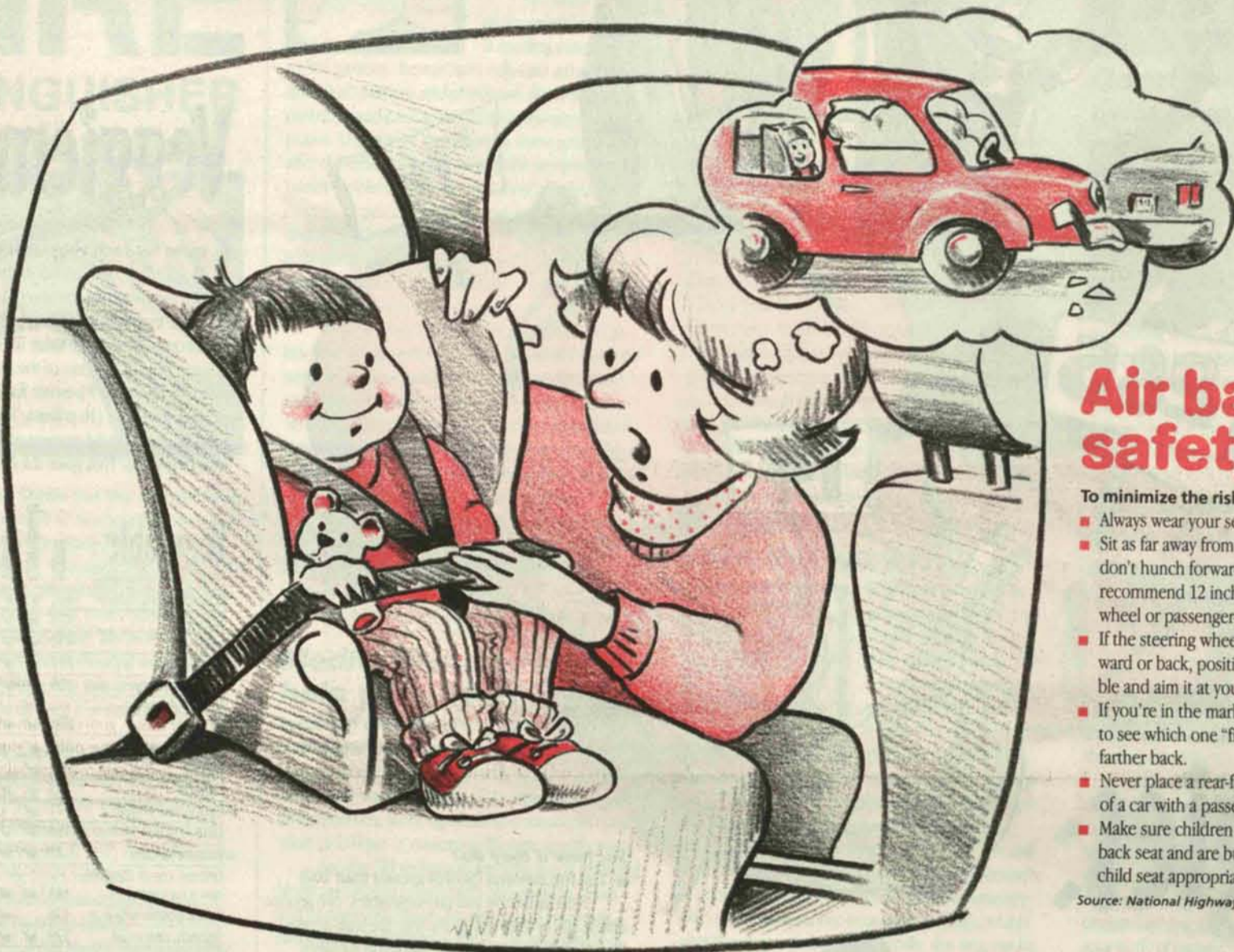
Michigan Weather Summary

	Temp.		Precip.	
	Obs. 12/1/96-12/31/96	Dev. from mean normal	Actual (inch)	Normal (inch)
Houghton	20.6	0.3	2.70	2.11
Marquette	20.1	2.4	4.57	2.11
Escanaba	23.1	0.1	2.03	2.11
Sault Ste. Marie	24.4	4.3	3.98	2.11
Lake City	28.1	4.8	4.28	2.15
Pellston	26.4	3.6	3.77	2.15
Traverse City	29.3	2.7	4.72	2.15
Alpena	26.6	2.4	5.04	2.06
Houghton Lake	25.2	1.4	2.10	2.06
Muskegon	29.2	0.6	1.74	2.49
Vestaburg	27.6	0.8	2.22	2.11
Bad Axe	28.3	1.4	3.11	1.93
Saginaw	29.0	2.3	3.18	1.93
Grand Rapids	28.6	1.3	2.32	2.71
South Bend	30.5	1.5	1.76	2.71
Coldwater	29.4	1.5	2.66	2.11
Lansing	29.2	2.0	2.56	2.11
Detroit	31.9	3.8	2.55	2.31
Flint	29.3	1.9	2.06	2.31
Toledo	32.9	4.2	3.27	2.31

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

HEALTH HARVEST

Air bags: Should you worry?



Air bag safety tips

To minimize the risk of injury from an air bag:

- Always wear your seat belt.
- Sit as far away from the air bag as possible and don't hunch forward in your seat. Some officials recommend 12 inches as a safe distance from the wheel or passenger-side dash.
- If the steering wheel tilts or can be moved forward or back, position it as far from you as possible and aim it at your chest, not your face.
- If you're in the market for a new car, try several to see which one "fits" best, allowing you to sit farther back.
- Never place a rear-facing infant seat in the front of a car with a passenger air bag.
- Make sure children younger than 12 sit in the back seat and are buckled in or strapped into a child seat appropriate for their age and weight.

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

You may remember the television ad from a few years back: Two crumpled wrecks lay on the side of a rural highway, their radiators steaming, after a head-on collision. Amazingly, we were told, both drivers walked away. The 1990 accident in Culpeper, Va., marked the first time two vehicles equipped with air bags were involved in a head-on crash. Until very recently, air bags were considered a premier feature in a new car, widely hailed as a life-saving technical advance. But in the last year, reports of several deaths attributed to air bags have raised car owners' fears that the devices they supposedly bought for protection may actually pose a threat.

Air bags have been implicated in the deaths of more than 30 children and 20 adults. In addition, an inflating air bag caused a woman who was eight months pregnant to lose her unborn baby. Those most at risk appear to be infants and children riding in the front seats of cars with passenger-side air bags, and smaller adults, particularly women, who sit close to the steering wheel, where the air bag is stored. Increasing concern about these incidents prompted government officials in November to issue warnings of their dangers and to step up the search for ways to improve safety.

Despite the recent spate of news, concerns about air bags aren't new, says Susan Ferguson, of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Government officials first alerted parents to the possible dangers to children as early as 1991, before any deaths occurred. Those warnings came after tests showed that the force of an inflating air bag could damage rear-facing infant seats — and their infant-dummy occupants — placed in a car's front passenger seat. Since then, safety officials have been spreading the word that under no circumstances should anyone place a rear-facing infant seat in the front of a car with a passenger air bag. And, because it's now clear that older children who are not yet adult size can be injured as well, experts advise that any child younger than 12 should ride in the back seat.

Risks to adults

But data on the potential harm to adults have been harder to come by. One major reason is that the crash tests used for adults are based on what's known in the industry as a "50th percentile male" — a 5'8", 168-pound male dummy without a seat belt, positioned with the car's seat in the middle slot. Under those artificially average circumstances, air bags work extremely well to prevent serious injury at the standard crash-test speed of 30 miles per hour. But the regulations currently don't require automakers to run tests for people who are belted in or who are shorter or taller than this standard — despite the fact that more than 40 million women in the United States are 5'3" or shorter.

When testing began, seat belt use in the United States was low, only about 15 percent of the population. These days, use is up — on average, about 70 percent of Americans buckle up. This means that, in many cases, an air bag may not need to inflate with as much force as it was originally designed to.

Now that more cars on the road are equipped with air bags, the patterns of injuries related to the devices are becoming clearer. An analysis of 18 adult drivers killed by air bags since 1990 showed that 15 were women under 5'5". One passenger, a 98-year-old woman, also died. The critical factor is proximity. Because shorter drivers, as well as passengers, tend to sit farther forward, they are closer to the bag when it deploys — at speeds up to 200 miles per hour. Hunching forward over the steering wheel, as even some people of average height do, has the same effect.

"When the air bag comes out, it's bunched up in a little ball, like a fist," says Julie Bolen, Ph.D., of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. By sitting farther forward, people make contact with the bag while it's still balled up, before it has time to inflate fully and cushion the impact of the crash. The inflating bag is also more likely to hit shorter people in the head instead of the chest.

What to do

Experts agree that the best way to minimize injury and maximize air bag safety in a crash is to wear a seat belt. Air bags are meant to provide supplemental protection in front-end collisions. Wearing a belt keeps you from being thrown forward, toward the deploying air bag, as the car jolts to a stop. Of the 18 adult drivers mentioned above, 10 were not wearing seat belts. Two other drivers apparently had slumped forward or blacked out from illness before the crash and were therefore closer to the air bag when it deployed.

It's also important to sit as far back in the seat as possible, to give the air bag room to inflate. The recommended distance from the wheel or passenger-side dash, Dr. Bolen says, is about 12 inches.

Some news reports have recommended that shorter drivers purchase pedal extenders — small blocks that attach to the car's pedals — to allow them to slide the seat farther away. But these devices are designed for people with disabilities and are available only through companies authorized to install them.

The design of a car can also make a difference. Shorter drivers in the market for a new car may want to try out a few to see how they "fit." In addition to differences in design, like how deeply the pedals are set, some cars have telescoping steering wheels that can be pushed away from you, or seats that can be raised for better visibility. Experts advise that tiltable steering wheels be positioned so that the inflating air bag will hit you in the chest, not the face.

Safety officials also warn that people shouldn't try to disable an air bag on their own. Federal regulations prohibiting car dealers and mechanics from deactivating air bags are being reconsidered. Newer models of some vehicles without a rear seat, like pickup trucks, come with an on-off switch for the passenger air bag, so that a child can ride in front safely.

Air bag benefits

While it's clear that air bags are causing some injuries, it's also important to keep these incidents in

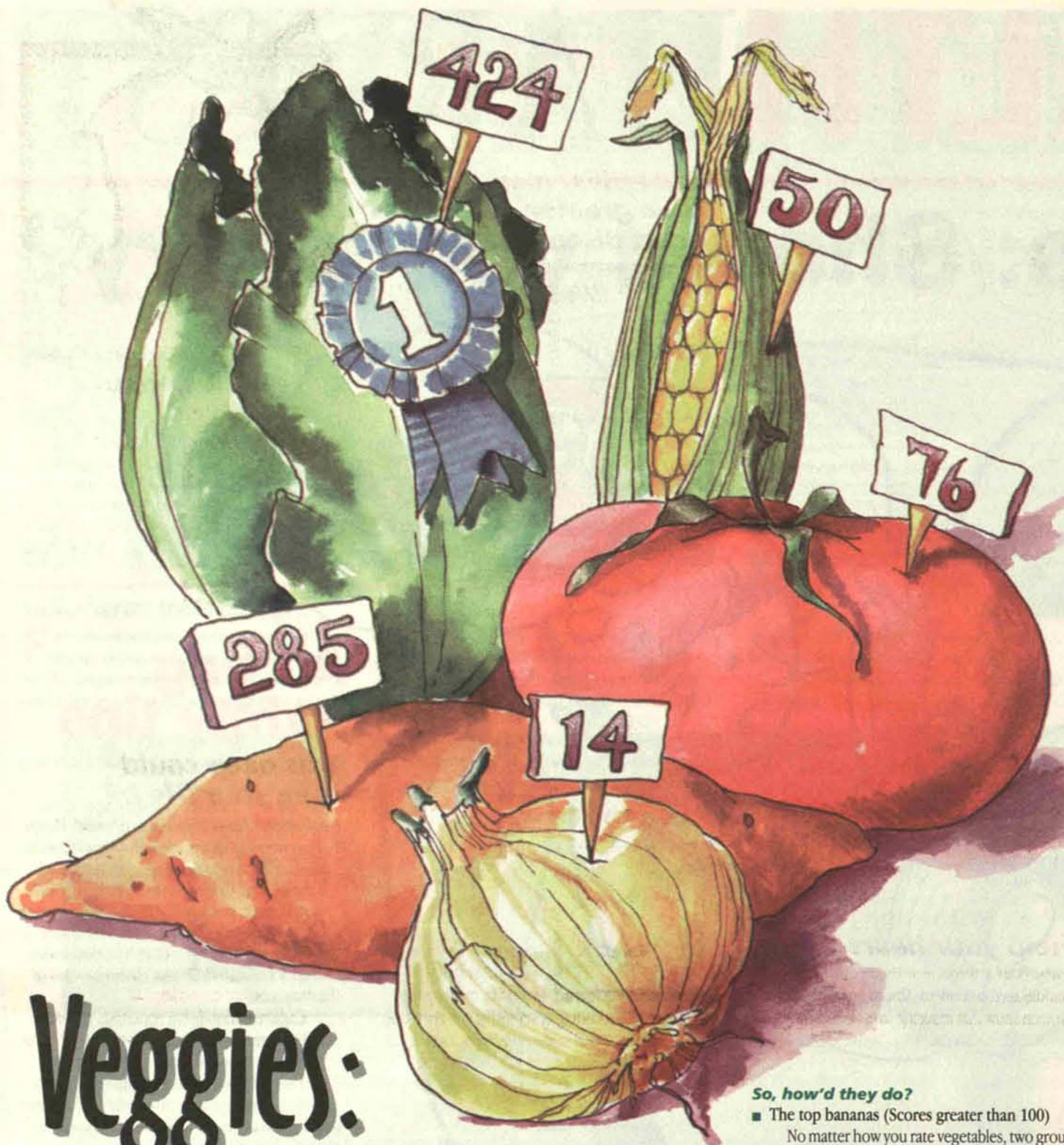
perspective. Since 1987, air bags have saved more than 1,100 lives, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, including more than 460 in 1995 alone. Those numbers are expected to increase as more vehicles with air bags hit the road. Researchers estimate that, by the end of 1996, air bags will have deployed nearly one and a half million times. Yet serious or fatal injuries caused by air bags are rare.

"Air bags are saving lives," says Elaine Weinstein, chief of the National Transportation Safety Board's Safety Studies Division. Government estimates show that having a driver-side air bag reduces your risk of dying in a car accident by 11 percent; for passenger air bags, the reduction is almost 14 percent. But those numbers are for all types of accidents, including rollover, rear-enders, and side-impact crashes. In front-end collisions, the type for which air bags are specifically designed and the ones most likely to cause serious harm, the devices can cut your risk of fatal injury by nearly 30 percent.

Even so, auto manufacturers and safety officials agree that changes need to be made to ensure air bags are even safer, especially for children. By the end of next year, all new cars will be required to have dual air bags. One solution being considered would be to lower inflation speed so the bags deploy with less force. In Europe, where seat belt use is nearly universal, smaller, less forceful air bags are already available. Another option is so-called "smart" technology that could detect an occupant's size, weight and position, and adjust the speed automatically or shut off if no one is in front of the bag. Some of these systems are already in development, but industry officials estimate they won't be available for several years to allow time for testing.

For more, contact the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Auto Safety Hotline, (800) 424-9393, or web site www.nhtsa.dot.gov.

Source: Health News, Dec. 10, 1996.



Veggies: Gimme five

Potatoes, tomatoes, onions and iceberg lettuce. The four most popular vegetables in the United States often end up as french fries, potato chips, tomato sauce on pizza, and ketchup, lettuce and onions on Big Macs and Whoppers.

Don't get us wrong: There's no such thing as a bad vegetable. Most are loaded with fiber, vitamins and some minerals. All are low in salt. And all but avocados are fat-free (the avocado's fat is mostly monounsaturated, the least harmful kind).

Even more important, researchers find that people who eat more vegetables are healthier. Which vegetables do what?

Rooting for benefits

So far, researchers only have clues. For example:

- People who eat more vegetables rich in **beta-carotene** have a lower risk of **cancer**, including colon, lung, and possibly bladder, esophagus, larynx, mouth, pancreas and throat. That doesn't mean beta-carotene is the protector. Researchers now think that beta-carotene could simply be a marker for other phytochemicals that often accompany it.
- The **soluble fiber** — and possibly the **flavonoids** — in some vegetables may cut the risk of **heart disease**.
- **Stroke** is less common among vegetable eaters, possibly because of the vegetables' **potassium**.
- People who eat spinach and other leafy green vegetables, that are rich in a carotenoid called **lutein**,

have a lower risk of **blindness** due to macular degeneration, a deterioration of the retina.

Because no one's yet been able to prove cause-and-effect, experts keep it simple: Just eat **more** vegetables — three to five servings a day (plus two to four servings of fruit) — and you're bound to get whatever in them is good for you.

How they're scored

Each vegetable's "score" (at right) was determined by adding up its percent of the Daily Value for two vitamins, three minerals, carotenoids and fiber. The fiber numbers are brand new, as published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Instead of including vitamin A in the score, the major carotenoids were added up: alpha-carotene, beta-carotene, lutein, lycopene and beta-cryptoxanthin. Some are converted into vitamin A by the body; some are not.

Certainly it's too early to say which, if any, protect against cancer, blindness or other illness. And if, say, lycopene and not the others turns out to be protective, a score that includes the other four may give a false reading of a vegetable's value.

Nevertheless, the uncertainty and imprecision of a carotenoid measure was chosen because carotenoids are more likely than vitamin A to prevent diseases like cancer. (If nothing else, the vegetables that are rich in carotenoids are good sources of vitamin A.)

So, how'd they do?

■ The top bananas (Scores greater than 100)

No matter how you rate vegetables, two groups always elbow their way to the top: the leafy greens, like spinach, kale and Swiss chard; and the deep orange-yellows, like sweet potatoes and carrots.

Most of these vegetables are sensational sources of vitamin C and carotenoids. (That's why those nutrients weigh heavily in the final score.) The greens are overflowing with them, in part because their leaves are so rich in the potentially eye-saving carotenoid lutein.

And some greens are decent sources of potassium, the B vitamin folate, iron or calcium. (The calcium in spinach is not well-absorbed, though.)

Carrots and sweet potatoes are not as well-endowed with quite as many different nutrients, but their hefty carotenoid levels — not to mention their taste — make them winners.

Broccoli and Brussels sprouts get spectacular scores because of their carotenoids, vitamin C, folate and fiber. And that's without any credit for their phytochemicals like sulphoraphane or indoles, which may help prevent cancer.

Green and (especially) red peppers are also top-notch vegetables, but note that a serving is half a pepper, not a sliver or two.

■ The middle of the pack (Scores 50 to 100)

OK, so they're not the leaders. They're still impressive. A mere half-cup of asparagus, peas or snow peas is a good (or close to good) source of carotenoids, vitamin C, folate and fiber. Few other foods can boast such plenty, especially for only about 20 to 60 calories.

■ The also-rans (Scores less than 50)

Mushrooms. Eggplant. Cucumber. Onions. Cabbage. They may be less nutritious than others. But then again, maybe someday researchers will discover that one or another of them harbors a life-saving phytochemical — perhaps the allium compounds in onions or the isothiocyanates in cabbage.

In the meantime, you can still enjoy the pleasures of marinated, grilled mushrooms, the aroma of sauteed onions, and the cool crunch of a freshly cut cucumber. ■

Source: Nutrition Action Healthletter, December 1996

Veggiemaniania

Scores for each vegetable were determined by adding up its percent of the Daily Value for five nutrients plus carotenoids and fiber.

For example, half a cup of cooked broccoli has 48 percent of the Daily Value for carotenoids (48 points), plus 97 percent of the Daily Value for vitamin C (97 points), 9 percent for fiber (9 points), 10 percent for folate (10 points), 7 percent for potassium (7 points), and 4 percent each for calcium and iron (8 points). That gives it a score of 179 points.

Vegetable	SCORE	Carotenoids	Vitamin C	Folate	Potassium	Calcium	Iron	Fiber
<small>(½ cup cooked, unless noted)</small>								
Collard greens, frozen	461	✓	✓	✓	*	✓	*	*
Spinach	424	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*
Kale	410	✓	✓	✓	*	*	*	*
Swiss chard	322	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	✓	*
Red pepper, raw (½ med.)	309	✓	✓					*
Sweet potato, no skin (1 med.)	285	✓	✓	*	✓			✓
Pumpkin, canned	252	✓	*	*	*	*	*	✓
Carrots	241	✓	✓		*			✓
Broccoli	179	✓	✓	✓	*			*
Carrot, raw (1 med.)	171	✓	*		*			*
Okra	165	✓	✓	*	*	*	*	*
Brussels sprouts	143	✓	✓	✓	*	*	*	*
Lettuce, cos or romaine, raw (1 cup shredded)	141	✓	✓	✓	*			*
Baked potato w/skin (1)	136	✓	✓	*	*		✓	✓
Spinach, raw (1 cup)	130	✓	✓	✓	*		*	*
Squash, winter	129	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Green pepper, raw (½ med.)	112	✓	✓					*
Mixed vegetables, frozen	112	✓	*					✓
Parsley, raw (¼ cup)	97	✓	✓	*				*
Broccoli, raw (½ cup)	91	✓	✓	*				*
Snow peas, frozen	89	✓	✓	*	*	*	*	✓
Peas, frozen	88	✓	✓	✓	*	*	*	✓
Asparagus	84	✓	✓	✓				*
Endive, raw (1 cup chopped)	82	✓	*	✓				*
Tomato, raw (½ med.)	76	✓	✓					*
Avocado, raw (½)	71	*	✓	✓	✓	*	*	✓
Artichoke (½ med.)	68	✓	✓	*	*			✓
Baked potato, no skin (1)	67	✓	✓		✓			*
Cauliflower	64	✓	*					*
Lettuce, Boston or bibb, raw (1 cup chopped)	59	✓	*	✓				*
Cauliflower, raw (½ cup)	58	✓	✓	*				*
Squash, summer	56	✓	*	*	*			*
Green beans	54	✓	✓	*	*			*
Parsnip	54	✓	✓	✓	*			✓
Celery, raw (1 med. stalk)	50	✓	*					*
Corn	50	✓	*	✓	*			*
Rutabaga	50	✓	✓		*			*
Cabbage	44	✓	✓					*
Cabbage, red, raw (½ cup shredded)	43	✓	✓					*
Green beans, canned	42	✓	*	*	*			*
Lettuce, iceberg, raw (1 cup chopped)	40	✓	✓	*				*
Corn, frozen	38	✓	✓	*				*
Beets, canned (½ cup sliced)	32	*	*	*	*		*	*
Mushrooms	32	*	*	*	*		*	*
Onions	31	*	*	*	*		*	*
Turnips	30	✓	✓					*
Radishes, raw (¼ cup)	18	✓	✓					*
Cucumber, raw (½ cup)	14	*	*					*
Onions, raw (¼ cup)	14	*	*					*
Eggplant	13	*	*					*
Mushrooms, raw (½ cup)	12	*	*					*
Alfalfa sprouts, raw (½ cup)	7	*	*					*
Garlic, raw (1 clove)	3	*	*					*

Note: Scores for cooked vegetables are usually higher because more cooked than raw vegetable fits into half a cup.

✓ = contains at least 10 percent of the Daily Value (DV).

* = contains between 5 and 9 percent of the Daily Value (DV).

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Nutrient Data Laboratory (www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/food.comp)

WHY EVERY HOME NEEDS A FIRE EXTINGUISHER



The United States has the highest death rate from fires of all developed countries. Space heaters, fireplaces, wood-burning stoves, electric blankets, Christmas lights, overloaded electrical circuits — all together these make winter the season for home fires. Don't think that all you need to fight a fire is water. Because so many fires originate in faulty or overloaded wiring, water can be dangerous, due to the risk of electrocution. That's why you should keep a portable fire extinguisher handy.

Every household should have at least one extinguisher — probably more than one, since all extinguishers don't do precisely the same job. Using the wrong type of extinguisher can be hazardous. Extinguishers are labeled A, B or C, or combinations of these, based on the types of fires:

Class A. Ordinary combustibles, such as wood, paper, cloth, plastic or rubber.

Class B. Fast-burning liquids, such as gasoline, cooking oils and paints, as well as grease and tar.

Class C. Electrical fires, which call for an extinguisher with nonconducting contents.

The label should also include a number indicating how big a fire the extinguisher can handle. Thus a "2" rating means twice as much extinguishing capacity as a "1." The higher the rating, the heavier the extinguisher — but it doesn't pay to buy a model too big to handle. The C models have no number rating.

In general, an "all-purpose" extinguisher (labeled ABC) is safe for use on all common household fires. The best choice to hang in the kitchen, however, is an extinguisher labeled BC. Mount the device away from heat sources, preferably near an exit.

Make sure all family members know how to use the extinguisher (for instance, it should be aimed at the base of flames). Make sure any extinguisher you buy is simple to use and easy for you and your family to lift and remove from its wall mounting. It should have some kind of safety catch to avoid accidental firing. And there should be an easy-to-read pressure gauge — remember to check it occasionally to make sure the pressure has not dropped too low. If it needs to be recharged, check the instructions on the side or look in the *Yellow Pages* under "fire extinguishers."

Words to the wise: Don't let a fire extinguisher make you overconfident. Use it only when you've made sure that everybody has left the house and someone has called the fire department. And use it only if the fire is small and your back is to a safe exit. If any one of these conditions isn't met, or you're simply not sure whether you should stay to do battle, just get out — fast. And close the door behind you. ■

Source: University of California at Berkeley Wellness Letter, January 1997

Healthy Bites

Whatcha say, Doc?



Patients frequently don't remember what their doctor tells them, according to a Mayo Clinic study.

The study focused on the results of general medical exams given to 566 patients. Researchers collected information from both patients and physicians about health problems and cardiac risk factors uncovered in the exams. They found that patients, surveyed at home after the exam, did not mention 68 percent of health problems diagnosed by their physician, including 54 percent of their most important diagnosed health problems. Some of the most frequently diagnosed health problems *not* reported by patients included: hypothyroidism, colorectal polyps, obesity, osteoarthritis and tobacco abuse.

Study author Dr. Sidna Scheitel believes the low level of agreement between physician and patients is due to a number of factors — misunderstanding of medical terminology used by doctors, "selective listening," and denial of the presence of health issues such as obesity and tobacco use. Also, patients and physicians may differ in their perception of the importance of a health problem.

The survey found patients who had received a new diagnosis or diagnosis of a major health problem, and patients who traveled a considerable distance for their care were most likely to remember and follow what their doctor had discussed with them.

Meditation may help your heart

Results of a three-month study of a group of middle-aged and elderly African-American men and women show that reducing stress by practicing the Transcendental Meditation (TM) program lowered blood pressure more significantly than another relaxation technique or education/lifestyle modification.

And the TM technique was effective in reducing blood pressure in people with high levels of stress and multiple risk factors for high blood pressure, said Charles N. Alexander, Ph.D., the lead author of the study. However, notes Edward D. Frohlich, M.D., editor of *Hypertension*, high blood pressure may not always be stress-related, so the results of this study may not be generalized to all cases. Also, he says, "it's important that anyone who has significant blood pressure elevation that is under medical control should not stop taking their medication."

I've noticed "sulfites" listed on some food labels. What are sulfites?

Sulfites are simply sulfur-based preservatives. They sometimes occur naturally in foods and beverages, especially fermented drinks, and they've been used since 1664 to slow the browning of fruits and vegetables, to prevent spots from forming on shrimp and lobster, to discourage microbial growth, to bleach some foods and to maintain the potency of some medications.

Sulfites used to be classified as "generally regarded as safe," or "GRAS." But in 1982, when the Food and Drug Administration was about to reaffirm the preservatives' GRAS status, the agency heard from consumers and doctors about adverse health reactions.

Studies revealed that some people, especially those with asthma, are sensitive to sulfites. It's estimated that up to 500,000 Americans are sulfite-sensitive. That's less than 0.2 percent of the population, but reactions could be severe, ranging from chest tightness or hives to fatal anaphylactic shock. For these people, enjoying a bottle of wine over a romantic dinner could mean an unexpected trip to the hospital — or worse.

Grumpiest men have greater heart disease risk



Men prone to angry outbursts face two to three times the heart disease risk of their calmer counterparts, a recent report suggests.

Researchers gave personality tests designed to measure how well people handled their anger to 1,305 men aged 40 to 90, none of whom had heart disease at the time. Those who described themselves as stubborn and grouchy and said they sometimes felt "like swearing or smashing things" got high scores on the anger scale. These men were about two years younger than their more level-headed peers and tended to smoke, drink and weigh more. But even after adjusting for these compounding factors, the grumpy group was still more disposed to heart problems, researchers found.

Over an average of seven years of follow-up, the men with the highest anger scores were about two-and-a-half times more likely to suffer angina (chest pain) as men with the lowest anger scores. And the angry men had more than three times the risk of having a heart attack or dying of heart disease.

Lose the lenses!



The options may be growing for nearsighted people eager to give up their glasses. Ten medical centers around the country are testing a new device that sharpens vision by molding the

cornea, without cutting or removing any eye tissue.

Instead, an eye surgeon implants a small plastic ring into the eye that changes its curvature, bringing distant objects into clearer focus. The ring is worn permanently and doesn't need maintenance as contact lenses do. And unlike radial keratotomy (RK) or photorefractive keratectomy (PRK), which alter the shape of the eye surgically, the ring can be removed if vision changes or better technology comes along. Early tests show that for one brand under development, the KeraVision Ring, vision improved to 20/40 in 95 percent of patients. But its use is limited to people who are only slightly nearsighted, and some patients may still need to wear glasses. If tests go well, the ring may be available in the United States in about three to four years.



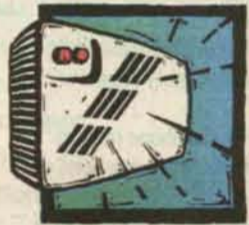
Illustrations by Barbara Hranilovich

Good news about gum disease



Thirty years ago, virtually all American adults had significant gum disease (periodontitis), but today only about 15 percent have moderate to severe gum disease. This improvement is due to better oral hygiene, fluoridation (which helps keep teeth healthy) and increased use of antibiotics. Gum disease, which can lead to loss of teeth, is caused by bacteria that live off trapped food at the gum line. One sure sign of periodontitis is gums that bleed during brushing.

This beep could save your life



An estimated 10,000 people are affected by carbon monoxide poisoning each year in the United States — 800 to 1,000 die. But installing a carbon monoxide detector could warn you of the danger before it's too late.

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas produced by incomplete combustion of fuel. It has no color, taste or odor. Carbon monoxide poisoning is like a form of slow suffocation. When you breathe in the gas, it attaches itself to hemoglobin, the oxygen-carrying protein in your blood. This reduces the oxygen-carrying capacity of your blood, starving your body of oxygen.

The most common sources of carbon monoxide are gas and oil furnaces, wood stoves, gas appliances, pool heaters and engine exhaust fumes. Others include cigarette smoke and paint removers containing methylene chloride.

Carbon monoxide detectors come in both plug-in and battery-powered models and generally cost between \$35 and \$80.

Office Calls

Still, most people are unaffected by sulfites — except for the fact that they keep food safer from bacteria. For this reason, the FDA did not totally ban sulfites. But they did set up some new regulations.

First, sulfites cannot be used on fruits and vegetables meant to be eaten raw. Also, the agency required companies to list sulfites on labels of products that contain sulfites in concentrations of 10 parts per million or more — the smallest amount that can be detected in standard tests.

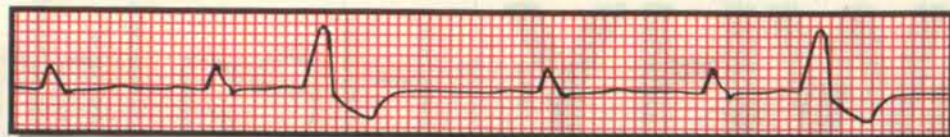
The FDA is considering additional regulations to warn consumers of the use of sulfites on fresh foods that are cooked and served without a label, such as french fries in a restaurant. But with the regulations already on the books and increased consumer awareness, reports of adverse health reactions to sulfites dropped to just six in 1995, compared with an average of 100 a year during the decade before that.

Asthmatics who are steroid-dependent or who have a higher degree of airway hyperreactivity may be at greater risk of experiencing a reaction. The FDA recommends sulfite-sensitive individuals to

check all food ingredient labels for sulfites. For bulk foods, ask grocery store managers or restaurant waiters to check the ingredient list on the product's original packaging. At restaurants, avoid dried fruits, maraschino cherries and guacamole, all of which may have been treated with sulfites, and choose baked potatoes instead of any dish that involves peeling the potato first. ■



Medical Focus



Knee replacement surgery can relieve pain and restore mobility

Your knees. Over a lifetime, these hard-working joints helped you walk, jump, dance — maybe even climb a mountain.

But years of wear, tear, injury and perhaps arthritis have taken their toll. At first, one or both of your knees ached a bit after a long walk or lively tennis match. Now, simple, everyday activities are painful. Rest and medication are no longer effective.

Once, painful knees would have sidelined you permanently. That may not be true today. Knee replacement surgery now helps more than 137,000 Americans get back on their feet each year. It may be the treatment you need to resume an active, pain-free lifestyle.

Cartilage cushion

Your knee is an engineering marvel. More than a simple hinge, it has one of the widest ranges of motion of any joint in the body. Not only does it bend, but it also slides, glides and swivels. In addition, it absorbs the force of up to seven times your body's weight when you use it.

To do all this requires a symphony of bones, muscles, tendons, ligaments and other tissues working together.

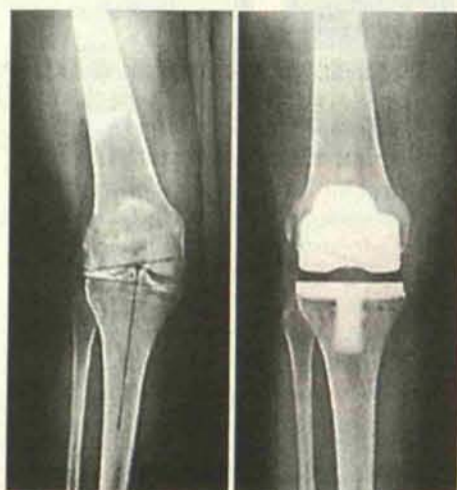
The bottom end of your thighbone (femur) rests atop your shinbone (tibia). When you bend your knee, the ends of these two bones move against each other, much like a hinge. In between is a cushion of cartilage — tough, shiny-white tissue that keeps the bones from rubbing together.

Ligaments connect the thigh and shin bones, while muscles and tendons stabilize the joint and enable it to move. Your kneecap (patella) helps protect the joint and anchors important tendons.

Replacing diseased tissue

Time, injury and disease can affect all of these parts. Pain, swelling and stiffness can result.

But since the 1970s, knee replacement surgery has offered people with chronic, debilitating knee pain a chance to resume an active lifestyle. Also known as total knee arthroplasty (ARTH-ro-plas-tee), the procedure has become as successful as hip replacement surgery — one of the century's best-known medical advances.



X-rays of an osteoarthritic knee before and after knee replacement surgery.

Knee replacement surgery involves removing or resurfacing parts of your thighbone, shinbone or kneecap, and putting in a prosthesis made of metal alloy and high-density plastic. Pain relief comes from replacing the diseased bone or tissue with the new knee parts.

While most who undergo knee replacement are age 60 or older, surgeons occasionally replace knees in people who are younger. However, the active lifestyles of younger people may cause greater wear and stress on the artificial knee, requiring it to be replaced in the future.

Common causes

The most common reason for surgery is osteoarthritis, which causes a gradual deterioration of the cartilage between the thigh and shin bones. Without the shock-absorbing cartilage, the bones begin to rub together, causing pain.

Less common reasons for knee replacement include:

- **Rheumatoid arthritis** — An inflammation of the tissue surrounding your joints, rheumatoid arthritis can cause deterioration of cartilage and other parts of the joint.

- **Post-traumatic arthritis** — This type of arthritis results from a knee injury and can cause debilitating pain even years later.

Realignment and replacement

Before recommending surgery, your doctor may advise you to first try pain medication, physical therapy, anti-inflammatory medication, avoiding activities that cause pain and, if necessary, losing weight. If these aren't effective, surgery may be an option.

The procedure is performed by an orthopedic surgeon, a doctor who specializes in the muscle and skeletal systems. The operation lasts about two hours and is done under spinal or general anesthesia.

Much of the operation focuses on getting your joint ready for the new knee. After making an incision, your surgeon moves aside your muscles, kneecap and connective tissues. Before the area is ready for the prosthesis, diseased bone must be removed.

Your existing connective tissues are realigned and will continue to hold the joint together after the prosthesis is in place. Leg bones damaged by arthritis may also need to be realigned.

The prosthesis usually consists of several parts not directly connected to each other. One of the largest is made of metal alloy and attaches to the end of your femur where diseased bone has been removed.

Another major component, also of metal alloy, resembles a tray on a pedestal. The surgeon anchors the pedestal of the tray into the shaft of your shinbone. The platform of the tray has a surface of high-density plastic. It provides a resting place for the metal component attached to your femur. The plastic acts as the new joint's cartilage.

The replacement may also include another small component — a circular piece of plastic that attaches to your kneecap to replace cartilage or diseased bone.

Return to activities

After surgery, you'll stay in the hospital about five days. During this time, you'll undergo physical therapy to help you get used to your new knee. You'll



An artificial knee joint includes, among other components, metal alloy caps for your thighbone (top piece) and shinbone (bottom piece). High-density plastic on the shin component replaces lost cartilage.

also receive antibiotics to prevent infection and anti-coagulant medication to prevent blood clots.

When you return home, you'll likely need crutches or a walker for about six weeks, and then a cane for another three to six weeks. But after your recovery period, you should be able to resume many of your favorite activities, including:

- Walking
- Dancing
- Golfing
- Swimming
- Bicycling

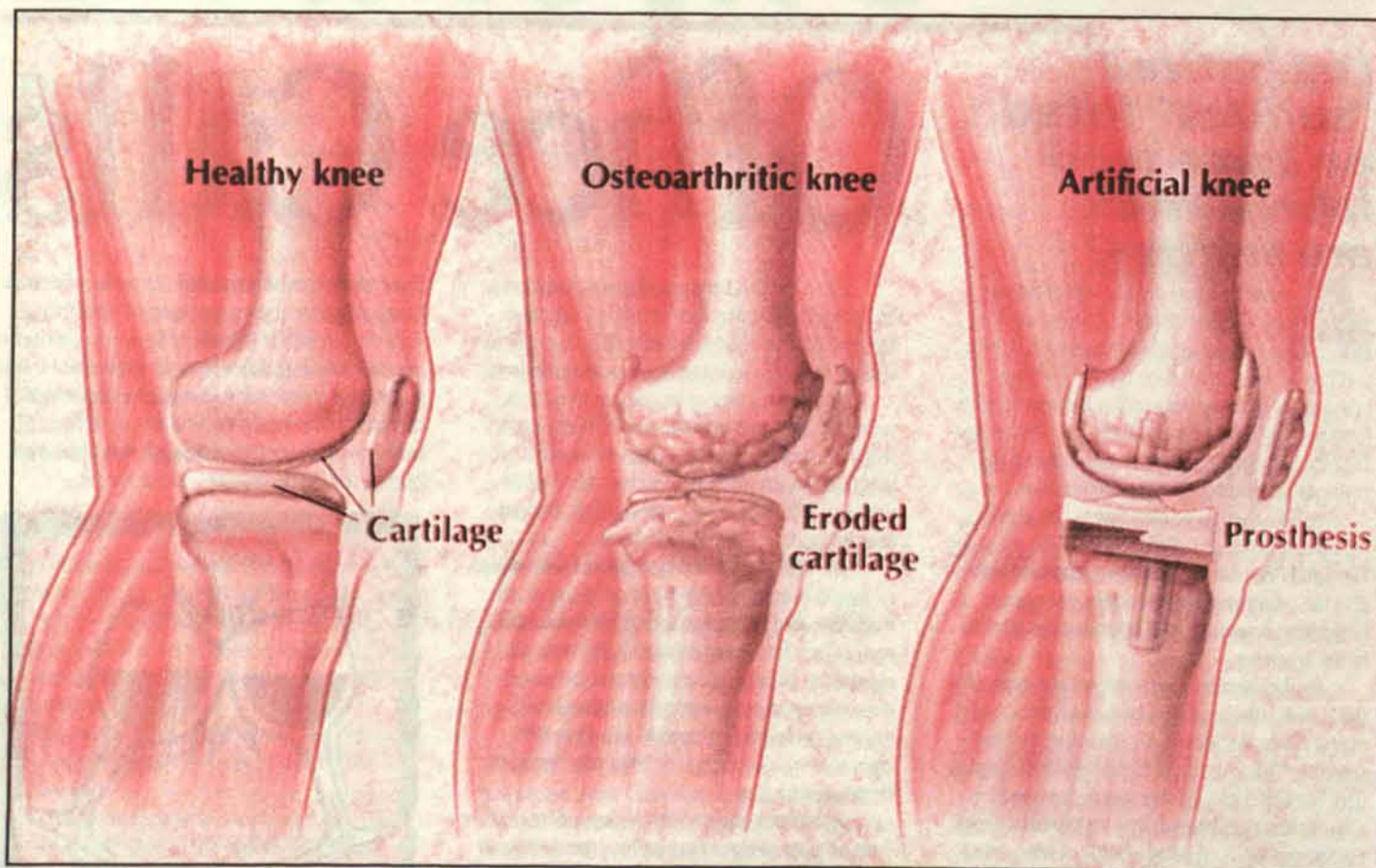
New lease on life

Follow-up visits with your doctor are important. Infrequently, problems such as wear, infection and loosening can occur with your new knee.

However, for most who undergo surgery, new knees are a new lease on life. Six years after surgery, about 90 percent of those who have had knee replacement surgery are pain-free and have experienced no breakdown of their new joint.

If your knee is keeping you on the sidelines, surgery may be one way to get you back on your feet and back into life. ■

Source: Reprinted from December 1996 Mayo Clinic Health Letter with permission.



Knee replacement surgery can repair damage from osteoarthritis and other inflammatory conditions. The artificial joint has metal alloy caps for your thighbone and shinbone, and high-density plastic to replace eroded cartilage within the joint and on your kneecap.

Anchoring your new knee joint in place

There are several methods for attaching the components of an artificial knee to your bones.

Surgeons can use a bone cement (methyl methacrylate) or a cementless prosthesis. The cementless prosthesis has a roughened, porous surface that allows the bone to grow directly into and around it.

Mayo Clinic surgeons prefer using bone cement to anchor the parts of your new knee in place. They believe cemented prostheses have less chance of early loosening and developing other problems. New methods of manufacturing and applying the cement may also improve outcomes.

Discover... The Synchrony[®] STS[®] Yield Advantage

Here are the seed companies offering varieties of STS soybeans that are available across the Midwest for the 1997 season. Purchasing STS seed is the first step in the Synchrony STS seed/herbicide system.

STEP
1
Purchase STS soybeans

Ag Seeds	Hoblit Seed Co.	Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc.
AgraTech Seeds Inc.	Hoegemeyer Hybrids	Prairie Seed Company
Agrinetics, Inc.	Hoffman Seeds, Inc.	Professional Seed Associates
AgriPro Seeds	Hubner Seed Co., Inc.	Ray-Carroll Seeds
AgVenture D & M Seeds, Inc.	ICI Seeds	Rosen's Inc.
Asgrow Seed Co.	IMC AgriBusiness Inc.	Rovey Seed Co.
Beck's Superior Hybrids	Interstate Payco	Rupp Seeds, Inc.
Bergmann-Taylor, Inc.	The J. C. Robinson Seed Company/Golden Harvest	Sands of Iowa
Bo-Ca Enterprises, Inc.	Kitchen Seed Co.	Sansgaard Seed Farms, Inc.
Brown Seed Enterprises	Langdon Bros. Seed Corp.	Schlessman Seed Company
Callahan Seeds	LaPorte County Seed Service	Scott's Quality Seeds
Campbell Seeds	Latham Seed Company	Shur Grow
Cenex-Land O' Lakes	Lewis Hybrids, Inc.	Sieben Hybrids, Inc.
Champaign Landmark, Inc.	LG Seeds, Inc.	Sommer Bros. Seed Co./Golden Harvest
Chemgro Fertilizer Co. Inc.	Marlin Wilken & Sons Seeds	Star Seed Inc.
Co-op Seed, Inc.	Mellow Dent Seed, Inc.	Stine Seed Company
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Dairyland Seed Co., Inc.	Midland Seeds, Inc.	Stoner Seed Farms, Inc.
Davis Seed Company	Midwest Seed Genetics, Inc.	Sun Ag Inc.
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Delta and Pine Land Company	Munson Hybrids	Terra Industries Inc.
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Great Lakes Grazing Conference

If you can graze dairy and beef cattle successfully, why not fallow deer, buffalo or even chickens?

Discussion about that question is one of the sessions of the Great Lakes Grazing Conference Feb. 17-18 at the McCamly Plaza Hotel in Battle Creek.

Conference registration is \$40 for the first person and \$25 for each additional person from the same farm if payment is made before Feb. 5. After that date, the price goes up \$10. The fee does not include meals (\$35 for breakfast, lunch and dinner) or lodging.

The conference will begin at 8 a.m. the first day (Monday) and conclude before noon the second day. A commercial trade show will be a part of the conference.

The discussion about deer, buffalo and chickens is one of the concurrent sessions Monday of the conference. Look for "Broadening Your Horizons". Other topics that morning will be grazing basics —

pasture renovation, paddock design, water systems, getting started in grazing — and mastering pasture resource management.

The afternoon program will review past pasture management practices being used in other parts of the world. Dairy and livestock graziers will also relate how they managed to cope with weather extremes ranging from drought to excessive mud in the past several years.

The evening program will consist of a panel of livestock graziers and pasture management experts discussing the future implications of grazing and pasture management for livestock production.

Tuesday's program will have three concurrent sessions on sheep, beef and dairy management.

The session for sheep procedures will focus on contracting lambs, working with creditors when financing the flock and stockpiling forages for winter grazing. It will also include an update on reducing the incidence of parasites in pastures.

The beef production topics will be buying and

managing stockers and what creditors need to know about financing the beef herd. There will also be discussion on the merit of trucking part of the beef herd to other farms for winter grazing when there is a forage shortfall on the home farm.

The dairy session will focus on raising calves on pasture and grain feeding in the parlor and in the pasture. It will also include a discussion on the value of pelleted feed.

Conference registration and meal costs should be sent to Grazing Conference, OSU Extension, Box 1268, Mt. Vernon, OH 43050-1268 by Feb. 10. After that date, call 614-397-0401 for registration information.

For lodging, call the McCamly Plaza Hotel at 888-622-2659 or 616-963-7050.

For more information about the conference, write to Ben Bartlett, MSU Extension, U.P. Experiment Station, Box 168, Chatham, MI 49816-0160, or call him at 906-439-5880. ■

Clinton wants fast-track trade authority

One of the Clinton Administration's first legislative initiatives for 1997 will be to seek renewal of its fast-track trade negotiating authority, which allows expedited congressional ratification of trade agreements with no amendments.

The initiative is expected to be marked by heated debates regarding the administration's ability to negotiate labor and environmental trade issues. Those issues have killed two previous attempts to pass fast-track legislative proposals.

The White House wants a "broad" fast-track bill — one that could be used to negotiate several free trade agreements and would allow those accords to include labor and environmental provisions. Critics of that approach say the immediate goal should be more simple — adding Chile to the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) supports fast track, but he is concerned about fast-track authority that would open the door to environmental and labor pacts. ■

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New "Gene-Stack" corn hybrids represent giant technology leap

For the first time in plant breeding history, corn hybrids are nearing commercialization that "stacks" genes by biotechnology, giving hybrids the ability to possess multiple beneficial traits including resistance to different types of herbicides, diseases, insects and even poor soil conditions.

"The genes that have been carefully selected and implanted in these hybrids are like defense shields. They protect the plant under assault from insects and disease or when incompatible herbicides are used. The breakthrough here is that several genes can now be put into one high-yielding hybrid," says Michael Martin, research director for ICI/Garst, based in Slater, Iowa.

Combinations of different stacked traits in hybrids are being field-tested by ICI/Garst. Pending final yield results and approvals from all companies involved, ICI/Garst expects to release a hybrid that resists the imidazolinone-based (IMI) herbicides from American Cyanamid and the glufosinate-ammonium based herbicide, Liberty®, from AgrEvo. "Hybrids with more than one herbicide resistance conferred by biotechnology represent the next evolution of herbicide-resistant plants and a positive breakthrough in crop management tools for farmers," says Stephen O. Duke, weed scientist at the Agricultural Research Service in Stoneville, Miss., and editor of the recently published book, *Herbicide Resistant Crops*.

"ICI/Garst is developing these gene-stacked hybrids to give farmers more management options and control flexibility. Our main objective is to maintain yield integrity and keep the seed affordable," says Col Seccombe, president of ICI/Garst. Pricing of the new stacked hybrids has not been finalized, but Seccombe says the economic benefits to the grower will be maintained.

With the new technology, a hybrid may be loaded with several traits — for example, having both the ability to resist certain herbicides as well as certain diseases like gray leaf spot or tolerate soil conditions such as high pH. "We're tailoring products for specific market niches and needs," Seccombe says.

Another potential combination is inserting the herbicide-resistant gene in a high-yielding hybrid that also resists European corn borers by incorporating *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) genes. ICI/Garst plans to test its own novel strain of Bt in a hybrid that is also resistant to Liberty herbicide. The company is referring to this combination as "BLT." The company is calling the process of incorporating more than one genetic trait into a hybrid, "G*STAC," which stands for "Garst State-of-the-Art-Crops." Growers are likely to see this on company seed bags in the future.

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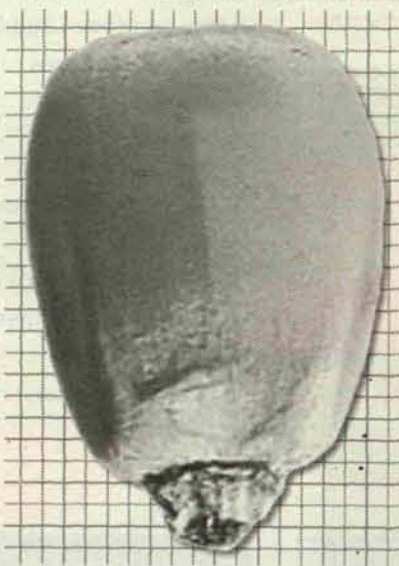
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Congratulations to Michigan's Young Farmer Award Winners



Young Farmer Achievement Award

Ed Kerlikowske, Jr. of Berrien Springs received the Young Farmer Achievement Award. Kerlikowske also will receive \$500 in cash from Dodge Trucks, a \$1,000 product certificate from Great Lakes Hybrids, a Carhartt jacket courtesy of Blue Cross Blue Shield and an all-expense paid trip to the American Farm Bureau Federation annual meeting.

Kerlikowske and his wife, Tina, own and operate a 285-acre produce and fruit farm.

Kerlikowske is active in Farm Bureau activities serving as Young Farmer and policy development chairman and has participated in the Lansing Legislative and Washington Legislative Seminars.

CRP contracts extended

According to an analysis conducted by USDA, conservation reserve program (CRP) contracts on approximately 12.4 million acres of land that were to have matured on Sept. 30, were extended for one year. That accounts for 87 percent of the 14.3 million acres that were scheduled to expire on Sept. 30.

Because of the extensions, contracts on 21 million acres of CRP land will now mature on Sept. 30, 1997. Previously, USDA expected that 1997 expiration figure to be between 23 and 24 million acres.

According to today's *Sparks Companies Report*, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman has met with top officials in the department to keep updated on the CRP issue. As of yet, there is no clear indication as to how USDA might change its initial proposal for CRP criteria as a result of the approximately 1,200 comments the department has received.



Discussion Meet Winner

Ingham County's Steve Cheney talked his way ahead of 30 other young farmers in Michigan's Young Farmer Discussion meet at the 1996 state annual meeting.

Cheney competed against five other finalists discussing the topic, "Is our nation's trade policy in the best interest of American agriculture?"

For winning the contest, Cheney will receive a \$75 savings bond compliments of Monsanto, \$500 compliments of Dodge Truck, \$1,000 Great Lakes Hybrids products, and an expense paid trip to Nashville, Tenn. for the American Farm Bureau Federation annual meeting.

Cheney was born and raised on his family's hog farm in Mason. He currently works with the Michigan Soybean Association and other agricultural organizations as well as being president of the Ingham County Farm Bureau and chairperson of the Young Farmer Committee.

Ways and Means Chairman Archer targets ethanol

There are a growing number of reports that Ways and Means Chairman Bill Archer (R-Tex.) is targeting the ethanol fuel tax credit for elimination or modification. When asked if he would be willing to eliminate some tax breaks for corporations, Archer called the tax credit "anachronistic" and said it is an area that needs updating.

Farm Bureau has written a letter to Chairman Archer stressing the importance of ethanol tax credits to farmers and consumers and stating AFBF's support for continuation of the credit.



Outstanding Young Ag Leader Award

Ionia County Farm Bureau President Joseph Marhofer earned the distinction of Michigan's 1996 Outstanding Young Agricultural Leader Award through his efforts not only in his county Farm Bureau, but in other agricultural organizations such as 4-H, local FFA Alumni president, member of Pheasants Forever, and Toastmasters, and active in local church.

Marhofer and his wife Lisa are owner / operator of a 200 hog operation on 280 acres near Belding. He is responsible for herd health and daily operations; feed trials, field test plots and manure application plots. They have three children: Timothy, 8; Daniel, 7; Thomas, 6.

For his achievement, he will receive \$500 from Dodge Truck, \$1,000 worth of products from Great Lakes Hybrids Inc., an all-expense paid trip to the American Farm Bureau national annual meeting, and a Carhartt Jacket from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and MFB.

Karnal bunt found in Georgia

The Agriculture Department recently announced the causal agent of the wheat fungus Karnal bunt was found in wheat from seven counties in Georgia. The affected counties are Morgan, Houston, Green, Jackson, Jasper, Johnson and Macon.

Nine states are now affected, including Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas, where areas of those states are quarantined to prevent movement of infected wheat. Other states where positive wheat samples have been found include Alabama, Oregon, Tennessee and Washington.



Outstanding Young Farm Employee

In the second year of the award, John Warnke, of Clinton County won the Outstanding Young Farm Employee Award for his diligence and labor on the St. Johns farm where he is responsible for mechanical operations on a 950-acre, 250-head dairy operation, maintaining dairy equipment and does field work. For three months of the year, he overlooks the entire operation for the owners.

Warnke, and his wife Patti have been active in Farm Bureau and other local activities such as the county young farmer, Policy Development, Membership, and Promotion and Education committees. And they both were delegates to state annual meeting, and county representatives for AFBF meeting this past year. They have two children: Bethany, 4; Allison, 3.

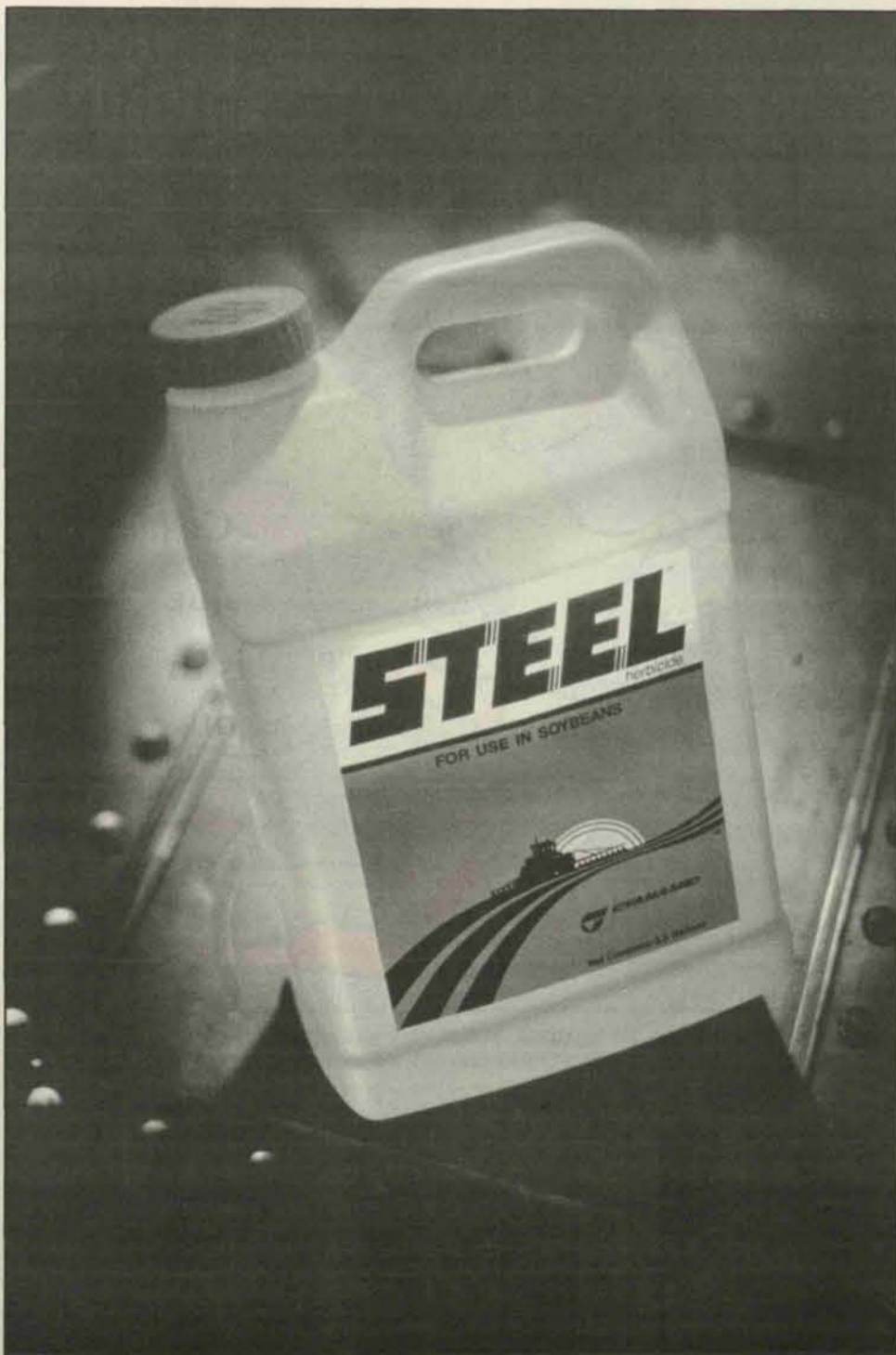
Warnke also serves as 4-H leader, church committee volunteer, and school millage volunteer.

He will receive a Carhartt jacket courtesy of Blue Cross Blue Shield, \$500 cash from Dodge Truck and an all-expense paid trip to Nashville, Tenn. for the American Farm Bureau Federation annual meeting.

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Discussion Topic

February 1997

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



With farmland values on the rise and proportionally escalating property taxes, landowners keep a sharp eye on their pocketbooks. Farmland values for tax purposes vary around the state, making some producers wary of property values determined by tax assessors.

The average value of farmland in Michigan was \$1,470 per acre in 1996, up \$141 per acre or 11 percent from 1995 levels, according to the USDA's Economic Research Service. This latest dollar figure represents a 46 percent increase from 1990, when the average value was \$1,005. Nationwide, farmland values rose 7 percent during the past year.

Demand for land is up because of favorable commodity prices and alternative uses for land (such as development), according to a study by Michigan State University agricultural economists Steve Hanson, Ralph Hepp and Lynn Harvey. Therefore, they say the price of land has also increased. Still, farmers want to be sure their assessments are fair.

Assessing Michigan farmland

In Michigan, property taxes are based on a series of classifications. Land is placed in one of six classifications: residential, commercial, industrial, developmental, timber cutover and agricultural. "The law requires that the property be assessed based on a number of things, including existing use," says Ron Nelson, Michigan Farm Bureau legislative counsel. Once it is classed, assessors determine the property's state equalized value (SEV).

Two issues strike a cord with some landowners. First, property assessments in Michigan are based on what the land would sell for, even if it's not for sale. When developmental pressures

As farmland values rise, some farmers question accuracy of assessments

abound, assessment values go up, although the landowner may never intend to sell for development. Second, the definition of "commercial" property puts some agribusinesses in that class, rather than agricultural. The result is a higher tax rate.

"In the case of agriculture, you would assume that land would be assessed at ag-land values," Nelson says. "The problem is that even though it may be assessed at ag values with equalization by class, if a farm sells for development at a high price, that tends to pull all the rest of the land in that township up. If you've got one piece of property that should be \$1,000 land, and it sells for \$5,000, it's going to notch up all the properties around it."

Because agricultural land is taxed at different rates than other land, making sure farmland is classified as such is important. However, the law states that if shipping, storage or other specific activities take place, the land should be classed as commercial. "If you take a very narrow definition of commercial, that would put a number of ag operations at risk," Nelson says. "For instance, in the case of apples, if there's a storage area — which would be typical — and a dock for trucks to load — which would be typical — you could conclude from that language that it is a commercial shipping operation, even though it is a grower shipping his own apples."

"It's partly a matter of interpretation," Nelson says. With 1,242 townships in the state, that leaves room for hundreds of assessors with different levels of understanding and attitudes toward agriculture. "You come up with a variety of assessing, which results in different values," he continues.

Michigan's diversity also plays a part. "When you look at Michigan farmland, which is some of the finest in the country, just a few miles away could be very marginal land," Nelson explains. "There are going to be very real differences in that land value and it can be very substantial within the state," Nelson says.

The use-value assessing option

While there are no plans to change Michigan's current assessment system anytime soon, a look at how some other states determine land values brings other ideas and challenges to light.

Some states base land values on its current use,

as if it couldn't be used for any other purpose. "I would submit that one of the major differences in those states is that they don't have the diversity of agriculture — the diversity in soils and climate that we have," Nelson says. "But in some states it seems to be working fairly well." These states often use corn as a base crop for agricultural use-value assessing. A soil type that will produce 100 bushels of corn is worth less than land that can produce 200 bushels of corn.

While thoughts on the subject vary, Nelson thinks use-value assessing is not the answer for Michigan. "In this state it could work, except then we layer in the specialty crops, which some states do not have as extensively as we do. It becomes fairly complex," he says.

Gene Thornton, director of legislative affairs for the Michigan Townships Association and an assessor himself, also believes that use-value assessment probably wouldn't work in Michigan, especially with Proposal A in place. This law limits the increase of the taxable value to the Consumer Price Index (rate of inflation) or 5 percent, which ever is lower. "If I take my potato farm and don't sell it, but I change the use from a potato farm to a rental housing development, it's limited to what the increase in assessment could be," he explains.

According to Thornton, it's not just development that could present problems. "Simply changing the crop on the land, going from a potato farm to a cranberry farm — cranberry land may sell for ten times what a potato farm might sell for — but I couldn't change the assessment more than the rate of inflation or 5 percent a year."

Long-term solutions

Several programs in Michigan are designed to protect property owners: Proposal A, the Homestead Credit Act, Public Act 116 and Public Act 198. Some believe these protections, coupled with Michigan's assessment system, provide a fair property tax structure. Others think adopting a use-value assessing program would be better.

"One of the things that may need to be done is a review of law procedures," Nelson says. "A review of the law might take a look at adding another classification such as rural-residential or recreational

land, because some of those may be lumped into agriculture land now."

According to Nelson, selling ag land for development should not affect the price of that farmland. "It will, in fact, affect it because of supply and demand," he says. "We've got to do a better job separating land that was agriculture, but very soon will become developed."

As a result of Proposal A, land that is classified as agriculture is levied six mills school operating, versus all other classes except residential. "Classification becomes critical," Nelson says. "I think some assessors have taken a second look at what they have classified as agriculture. Maybe or maybe not appropriately."

"In that case," he continues, "if the land would otherwise qualify for P.A. 116, the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act, you could then file a claim for ag exemption, which takes you back to the six mills."

Nelson says it's important to remember property taxes are a function of both the property's assessment and the millage rate. The law allows local governments to tax 15 non-voted mills and the rest, of course, are voted on.

Nelson says Farm Bureau members should act if they think their land has been unfairly assessed. "Members could get involved in two ways: one is to approach the board of review with good documentation, and number two is to serve on the board of review," he says. ■

Discussion Questions

1. Is Michigan's current assessment system fair? What changes, if any, are needed?
2. Do the six land classifications used by assessors in Michigan adequately represent land uses in the state?
3. How can farmers ensure land is fairly assessed within their communities?
4. Is there a better way to fund schools and local government activities, rather than a millage? What type of tax revenue system would fairly spread costs over those who benefit from them?

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Pioneer seed corn plant quietly confident in Constantine

Plant recently receives ISO 9000 quality recognition

Unbeknownst to many producers throughout the state, the largest seed corn production plant in the world sits quietly in the southwestern Michigan town of Constantine, producing 2.4 million bushels of seed corn for use around the world.

"Last year, we were just shy of 40,000 acres," states Terry Garner, plant manager. "Our bulk storage, if everything is full, is about 820,000 bushels. Because we conditioned all through harvest, 12 hours a day, we had 280,000 bags packaged during harvest. Our harvest lasted 46 days and we average 30,500 bushels a day. Now we'll run 16 hours a day at least five days a week from now until April, if not a little later."

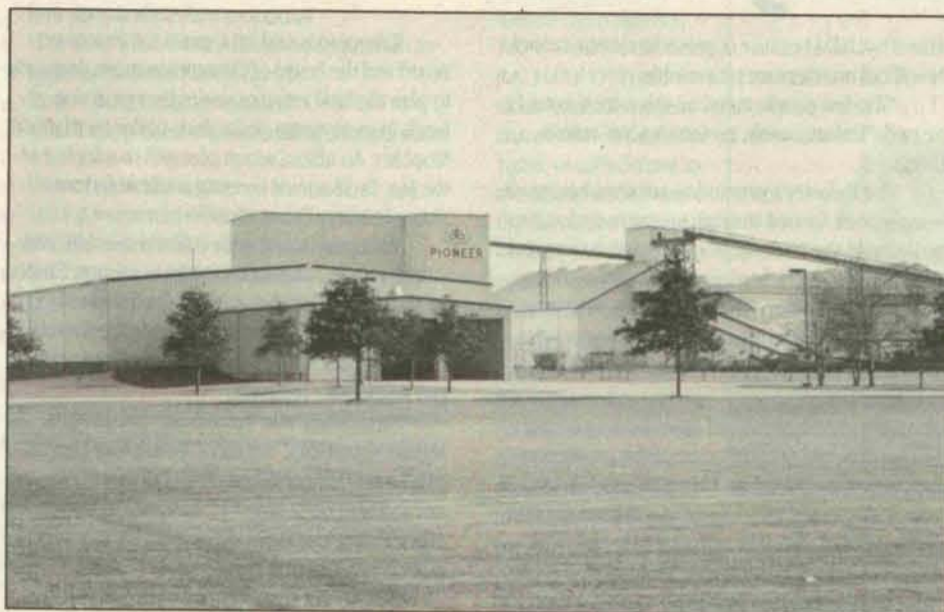
"It turns out to be probably one of our best years ever or maybe the best year as far as yield," explained Al Spice, assistant plant manager and head of the field team coordinating the plant's 70 producers. "We had a late, wet spring and some trouble getting the crop in. It was really dry from Three Rivers north, they didn't get any rain at all this summer, they were working their pivots to the max."

"We were coming out of detassling, going into harvest, we were optimistic but we didn't think it was a record crop," adds Spice. "We had real mild temperatures and excellent pollination. If we get high temperatures during pollination, it'll kill the pollen and we won't get good pollination. But we had cool nights and pretty cold days this summer, and that's what really helped us. We had fully pollinated ears and we had our best harvest definitely since I've been here, and probably our best harvest ever."

Challenges of raising seed corn

As with every producer around, Pioneer is no different when it comes to finding good, hard-working help. According to Garner, each year 4,200 detasslers are hired from area schools. "We're working six months out of the year to get detasslers," he adds.

"The economy's good; I don't think anybody's telling you it's easy to find good employees," states



As with every producer around, Pioneer is no different when it comes to finding good, hard-working help. According to Garner, each year 4,200 detasslers are hired from area schools.

Garner. "You've got Nebraska dealing with under 2 percent unemployment and southeast Iowa at 1.5 percent. What we're looking for is people who didn't realize they wanted a job."

"There's about 40 contractors that will use some of our tools, our payroll system, and we'll actually do the transporting," explains Garner. "They have approved buses, CDL drivers and they have to meet all the criteria that goes with it. We also hire 150 people to run the mechanical detassling equipment."

According to Garner, sweet corn presents a unique challenge to avoid cross-pollination in producing 37 different varieties of high quality seed corn in southwestern Michigan. "If you have a field of sweet corn adjacent, anything over five acres, you've got to be a quarter of a mile away, which doesn't sound like a lot, but at times it can be," notes Garner. "Even a sweet corn patch with just a few plants is a big issue. Knowing where those are, identifying them early to try to either time it so we

miss the problem or work with the cooperators and growers on how we resolve it so that the grower doesn't lose seed."

New quality registration for all Pioneer plants

According to Spice, all 19 seed corn production facilities achieved ISO 9000 quality system registration recently.

ISO 9000 is a series of internationally recognized standards for quality management systems that's becoming increasingly popular among companies worldwide. Registration is something like a 'seal of approval' for the way a company ensures quality.

Companies pursuing ISO 9000 registration must analyze and document the way they ensure quality and meet 20 standards for business operations. Then they must undergo an audit by an outside, independent authority to prove that they follow their documentation and have met ISO 9000 standards. Registrations apply to the way the com-

pany operates, not to a specific product or service.

"Pioneer was the first seed company to get the registration," explains Spice, who headed up the Constantine plant's registration in the widely accepted system. "It's not trying to define what quality is, it's just saying that if you're going to produce a quality product, control your quality, you're going to have to show how you do it. For instance, in the calibration of equipment, we weigh so much corn. How do you know you're weighing the right amount of corn for your tests? What are your standards? You have to define them and how you maintain those."

Achieving the ISO 9000 designation wasn't an easy process, says Spice. "You have to really be able to document how you do your work, how you control your quality, how you calibrate your equipment and your documents, how you train your employees, what your quality standards are and what you do if you're outside those standards."

"We'd like to be able to show through ISO and our quality system that we could self-register or certify our corn," hopes Garner. "There's a potential savings there. I don't know if it will be possible through ISO per se, but it's helped change the seed certification industry's ideas of what's needed to certify seed. So it'll probably come back and achieve that goal." ■

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Sheep industry loses checkoff

Industry leaders announce steps to phase out lamb, wool promotion

Sheep industry leaders announced they will begin the phase-out of the sheep industry's 43-year-old promotion program. The announcement came on the heels of the long-awaited but still unofficial word from USDA indicating the sheep industry checkoff, held Oct. 1, failed by a slim margin.

Preliminary information indicates USDA is still in the audit process on the second referendum with final official word to be withheld until sometime after the first of the year.

But American Sheep Industry (ASI) president and Colorado rancher Steve Raftopoulos said USDA has indicated the results are in.

"The producers of this country have spoken and we will respect their decision," said Raftopoulos, adding ASI has no plans to spearhead a second checkoff plan. "I am deeply disappointed that the nation's producers have chosen not to invest in product promotion."

Raftopoulos said reports are that voter turnout was very low compared to the first referendum inval-

idated by USDA because of procedural irregularities. No official numbers are yet available.

"Too few people voted on this critical issue," he said. "Unfortunately, no vote is a 'no' vote in this case."

The industry's promotion activities have traditionally been funded through incentive deductions provided in the National Wool Act, which Congress phased out in 1995, leaving the industry without promotional funding. The referendum put a new checkoff program on the table to enable continuation of promotion, research, education and information efforts.

ASI's Executive Board carved out a package for the downsizing and closure of the promotion activities of the American Sheep Industry Association, Raftopoulos said. That plan will be put before ASI's board of directors at the January American Sheep Industry Convention in Nashville.

"It is our job to responsibly carry out lamb and wool promotions that have immediate, hard-hitting benefits for the industry and to get the best bang from these last dollars invested in product and industry promotion, education and information," he said. "I anticipate the long-term programs will be terminated in favor of more short-term impact projects. We must move aggressively to do what we can to strengthen the industry's ability to deal with issues on the farm and in the marketplace."

Raftopoulos said he expects the Executive Board and the board of directors to move decisively to plan the final activities under the remaining funds from incentive deductions under the National Wool Act. An official action plan will be adopted at the Jan. 14-18 annual meeting at the American Sheep Industry Convention.

Raftopoulos said ASI's dues-funded functions — lobbying and member services — are now funded by about \$400,000 in dues from the federated states, advertising revenues and contributions. Ultimately, he said, those funds will be utilized to maintain an industry presence.

"It is critical that the industry preserve its legislative visibility," he said. "We are very concerned this industry decision will negatively impact our ability to do business in Washington, D.C., both in regulatory and legislative arenas. We will move quickly to reorganize that function."

"Issues like scrapie, private property rights, animal health and food safety, imports — all those will continue to affect our industry," Raftopoulos said. "We must be there to fight those battles."

Raftopoulos called on the groups who opposed the referendum based on the structure of the program to come forward with some alternative that unifies the industry to address key issues and provides lamb and wool promotion.

"It's time to hold those groups accountable.

They stated support for a national organization and support of promotion," Raftopoulos said. "Our only option is gone. I look forward to the options these groups will put on the table to protect the domestic industry's ability to compete in the marketplace."

Raftopoulos said industry leaders looked at many options in building the checkoff proposal, foremost the need to give producers a voice in the marketing and promotion of their product. The plan, he said, brought import dollars into domestic marketing. It is unlikely the importer contribution will ever be secured by the industry again, Raftopoulos said.

He challenged the opposing groups to find a better alternative to the checkoff they adamantly opposed.

"There are critical issues the growers will watch," he said. "We want a voice in the decisions and we want to see adequate funding to make a difference in the industry."

Raftopoulos said voluntary checkoffs, discussed by industry prior to the move to secure a mandatory checkoff, would likely not raise more than \$1 million to \$2 million a year and could not meet the needs of the industry.

"Producers say they want promotion, education, information and research on both lamb and wool," Raftopoulos said. "This 'no' vote means no programs. I look to the opposition for an answer."

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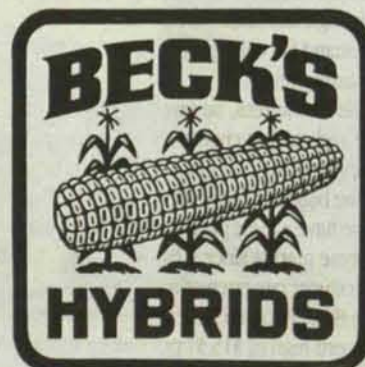
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Purchase of Development Rights Workshop Scheduled

Friday, Jan. 31, 1997 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Kellogg Center, East Lansing

In an effort to educate landowners about the upcoming application period for the purchase of development rights of qualified farmland parcels the Department of Natural Resources and Michigan Department of Agriculture are teaming up to sponsor a workshop on Jan. 31 from 1-4 p.m. at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing.

What is the purpose of the workshop?

The state of Michigan will once again receive applications to purchase the development rights on farmland. This workshop will explain the state PDR program and provide detailed information regarding the April 1, 1997 application deadline. The application will require information to be provided by the landowner, the local unit of government and the local conservation district.

Benefits that a landowner would receive from selling their development rights to the state of Michigan would include a cash payment for the development rights, retention of ownership and all other non-development rights to the property, possible reduction of property and estate taxes, and preservation of the property for future generations of farmers. Property owners who sell their development rights under this program are not granting public access to their property.

What topics will be covered at the workshop?

- What is a purchase of development rights program?

- What advantages are there to a landowner and how does it affect future options?
- How does a landowner fill out an application to apply to the state PDR program?
- How will the farms be selected?
- What is the process after submitting an application?

Who should attend?

- Interested landowners
- Local government officials
- MSU Extension office representatives
- Soil Conservation District agents
- Conservancy organization staff
- Any other agricultural or conservation related agencies

How can I register?

There is no workshop fee, but seating is limited so please register as soon as possible by contacting:

Robin Pearson, Farmland and Open Space Preservation Unit, Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 30449, Lansing, MI 48909-7949; Phone: 517/373-3328, Fax: 517/335-3131.

For those unable to attend, a satellite airing of this workshop is scheduled for the evening of Wednesday, Feb. 12, 1997. Contact your county Extension office for the specific time and location.

Facts about Michigan's PDR program

Michigan's Purchase of Development Rights program is administered by the Department of Natural Resources in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Agriculture. The Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act, Part 361 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, P.A. 451 of 1994 (formerly P.A. 116 of 1974) provides funds for the purchase of development rights, usually defined as the difference between the fair market value of the property and its agricultural value. This program allows landowners to sell development rights to the state for a fair market value, and the state retains the development rights in order to prevent the property from being developed for non-agricultural uses. In this way, the property is permanently preserved for future agricultural use, and the landowner retains all other rights to the land including fee ownership.

According to Scott Everett, MFB associate legislative counsel, the recent amendments to P.A. 116 allows for P.A. 116 lien fund monies to be utilized for the purchase of development rights of farmland only. Through this voluntary program, interested property owners may nominate their farmland parcels for purchase of development rights by submitting an application form to the DNR. All applica-



Through the PDR program, development of farmland is controlled.

tions postmarked, faxed or hand-delivered by April 15, 1997, will be considered for the 1997 purchase of development rights acquisition year. The application form requires information and signatures from the landowner, the local unit of government and the local conservation district. All applications must be approved by the local unit of government in order to be considered. Submitting an application does not bind the landowner to an eventual sale; it simply allows the land to be eligible for consideration and possible selection. ■

European Commission approves gene-modified corn

The European Commission is apparently finding it difficult to argue with mounting scientific evidence that crops produced through biotechnology are safe. Wednesday, the commission conditionally approved an application from Ciba Geigy AG to market its gene-modified corn.

European Farm Commissioner Franz Fischler said marketing of the biotech corn will be allowed "with some labeling conditions." The go-ahead was given after three European Union scientific panels said there were no reasons to reject the new corn. "There's not much alternative than to follow the scientific advice," Fischler told the Reuters news service.

While far from perfect with labeling conditions attached, approval of the biotech corn is expected to somewhat ease trade tension between the EU and the United States. Still unhappy, however, are other Europeans, namely environmental groups that wanted the Commission to reject or delay approval of biotech corn on the dubious grounds of "uncertainty."

The scientific community, time and time again, has stated that crops thus far forwarded for approval are safe. Appearance-wise, the crops are identical to their conventional cousins — a fact that makes labeling the biotech varieties virtually impossible. ■

USDA Announces Milk Market Price Initiatives

Continued from front page

says this action was taken in response to input about the accuracy of reported prices. USDA will also review its use of National Cheese Exchange prices as part of a congressional mandate to reform and consolidate federal milk marketing orders by 1999.

"These actions will help to strengthen a dairy market that for the most part appears to have a solid foundation," Glickman said. Milk production so far this month has been virtually unchanged from 1995 levels for the same period. And despite the recent slowdown in commercial demand caused by double digit increases in retail dairy product prices, demand for dairy products continues to exhibit steady gains.

While Kirk agrees, he says producers need complete and current cheese market price information. He expects the cheddar cheese price survey to provide the biggest benefit for producers. "It's critical that we have a clear picture of what's going on in the cheese market since it has such huge impact on the producer pay-price of milk," Kirk said.

The Basic Formula Price for milk has dropped from a record high of \$15.37 per cwt. in September, to \$11.34 per cwt. in December. Kirk says a large share of that drop is due to drastic swings in the cheddar cheese market. ■



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Business Strategies Managing Farm Costs

by Dr. Sherrill B. Nott, Department of Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University

As you close out the books on 1996, income tax reporting is probably your main concern. No doubt about it, taxes have to be filed. But after putting in all that work for the tax collector, why not make the records work for you, also? Tax records are a good place to start in managing costs.

Managing Costs

Step one in cost control is to know what your cost levels are. The federal farm tax form (Schedule F) includes a list of cost items. It's a good place to commence. Make an extra copy of Schedule F to use as a worksheet. Plan to mark it up with notes and ideas.

Step two is to rank your costs from the largest to smallest by total dollar amount. Schedule F lists costs alphabetically. This isn't good enough. Make a new list with the cost item having the biggest dollar amount on the top. The smallest amount should be on the bottom.

Step three is spending management time deciding how to control the cost items which are the largest. This is why you do Step two first. Go to the top of the list. If you are busy, you may make it only part way down the list. But by starting with the biggest items, your scarce time will have been spent on the key items.

Give someone on the management team the responsibility of being a knowledgeable purchasing agent. This means being tolerant of careful comparison shoppers. It means providing telephone time and note taking facilities to find out alternative prices. Encourage the purchasing agent to mail out bid requests for items that have grades and contents you can specify.

Step 4 is recognizing different approaches are needed to control different cost items. Bids may work for buying standard fertilizers. But controlling real estate taxes may mean understanding how local government works. Some costs may be beyond



Young Farmer Achievement Award winner Ed Kerlikowske and his wife, Tina, use accounting software to increase their productivity.

your immediate control; if so, don't waste time on them. Lease payments you've already contracted for are an example.

Cost of Production

We'd like to sell farm products for more than it costs to grow them. Do you know what it costs to grow each of your products? Figuring cost of production requires more time than tax filing because quantities, as well as dollars, get involved. Also, some cost items that are not tax deductible are often considered. Unpaid family labor and interest on net worth are examples. Adjusting for prepaid expenses may be needed if tax filing is done on a cash, instead of accrual, basis.

The basic formula is to divide the total dollars of cost by the quantity of product grown. If it cost \$40,000 to grow and sell 20,000 bushels of corn, the cost of production is \$2.00 per bushel. If you calculate this for 1996, remember inventories. If you had empty corn bins in January 1996 and full bins in December 1996, these should be considered in counting the bushels. Most farmers try to isolate the actual

crop grown for a given calendar year and match it with the costs incurred by that year's crop. Once this corn example is understood, how will you handle winter wheat which is planted one year and harvested the next? Remember, I suggested above you have a Schedule F copy to mark up as a worksheet!

The basic formula works well if the farm primarily sells one product, like milk, or apples, or hogs. If small amounts of income result from related products, their sales or value can be subtracted from total costs assigned to the primary product. For example, the income from cull cows can be subtracted from dairy farm costs before calculating the cost of producing milk.

Cost Accounting

Now consider the reality of a farm that produces several items of roughly the same total value. A hog farm growing corn, wheat and beans is an example. The hogs, wheat and beans are sold, but half the corn is fed to the hogs. We now have an allocation problem of what costs to assign to what items. This problem is best solved by going to cost accounting, or profit center accounting. Some call it enterprise accounting.

The goal of enterprise accounting is to show the income and expense associated with one piece of your business. Production expenses would be allocated to the crop, such as corn or apples or hay. The costs can then be shown per acre or per bushel. Livestock is often reported per head or per cwt. You might want to change your 1997 book keeping system and start cost accounting with your monthly financial entries.

You should first convince yourself the end results of enterprise accounting are worth the effort. A good start is to look back at 1996. There's a couple

things worth trying. First, set up a spread sheet, either on paper or on your microcomputer. List the crops you grew across the top. Down the left list your expense categories from your income tax forms.

For instance, you might have total seed expense. Split that among the crops you've listed across the top. Then move to fertilizer, and so on. An hour or two per day for 3 or 4 days should build a picture of your individual enterprise costs.

The Finpack Option

A second option is to contact your Michigan State University Extension office and arrange to use computer software called Finan, Year End Financial Analysis. It's part of the Finpack financial software. District Farm Management, and other area of expertise, agents can assist you with the software entries and interpretation of results.

You begin by entering the income and expenses from the tax forms or farm book keeping system. These are combined with inventories for the beginning and the end of 1996. Then choose the whole farm with enterprise analysis alternative. This lets fertilizer dollars, for example, be allocated among the crops grown. In three to five hours your management team could work through your 1996 records allocating the pieces to your various enterprises.

Finan will print you a whole farm income statement with profit measures and ratios. For each profit center set up, an enterprise report of the income and the costs are given per acre of crops or per head of livestock. Breakeven yields are shown. It allows internal transfers so expense for feed to the livestock is shown as income to the crop enterprise if it's a farm grown crop.

With this information, you will know whether your cost per bushel, or per pound, or per dozen, or per hundredweight is more or less than the price received. Cost accounting can show you whether corn or beans or canola are the most profitable on your farm. It can show you whether it's more profitable to buy feed or grow it for livestock.

Either the worksheet or Finan will give you insight as to how useful your current bookkeeping system is for cost accounting. Either will show that allocating incomes and costs will be more accurate if done closer to the time when the money is handled. But, there are some things, such as electricity and building repairs, whose allocation will have to be estimated regardless of when they are paid. For these, perhaps it's just as well to estimate the allocation only once a year.

Summary

Cost management can be done in several ways. Enterprise, or cost, accounting is the ultimate base from which to manage your farm costs. If you use a microcomputer to keep your financial records, 1997 may be the year to get into cost accounting. Knowing your enterprise costs and returns is the first step in controlling them. It will put you in a better position to continue making profit in the future. ■

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Distinguished Service to Agriculture Awards



Honored with the Distinguished Service to Agriculture award at the 1996 Michigan Farm Bureau annual meeting were **Dr. Robert Gast** who held the position of Associate Vice Provost and Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station for over 13 years at Michigan State University before becoming Acting Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies there last year.

Gast led the Ag Experiment Station to many significant accomplishments, including improvements to the Kellogg Biological Station by focusing on integrated farming systems, dairy production and forage management. He was a strong supporter of the development of the Southwest Michigan Research and Extension Center and the establishment of the Upper Peninsula Tree Improvement Center in Escanaba.

Bob and his wife, Mary Lou, reside in Okemos.

The second recipient of the Distinguished Service to Ag Award is **Dr. John "Jake" Ferris**.

Dr. Ferris came to Michigan State University's Department of Agricultural Economics over 40 years ago. During that time he has authored more than 1,000 publications and given hundreds of workshops across the state to Michigan producers to help improve their marketing skills.

He was also instrumental in the completion of supporting research for the \$70 million livestock initiative, currently underway at MSU and has been responsible for a bi-weekly crop and livestock market outlook for many years.

Jake and his wife Maxine have long been supporters of their church and community by providing leadership for the creation of the first non-profit licensed pre-school and early elementary educational program for the greater Lansing community. ■



Sugar Beet Growers Association Announces Sugar Contract Changes

Members of the Great Lakes Sugar Beet Growers Association recently received word of major changes to their sugar contracts negotiated with the Michigan Sugar Company.

"This agreement was achieved after several meetings starting in late September and concluding Dec. 20," explains Richard E. Leach, Jr., executive vice president of the association. "Members of the Contract Committee expressed satisfaction with the new contract, feeling that it would go far in rebuilding the Michigan sugar industry."

According to Leach, the new contract is for three years and can only be reopened by mutual consent of the growers' Contract Committee and Michigan Sugar Company. This will give growers the incentive and security to invest in new equipment and the sugar company the security to continue in a positive relationship with growers.

The new contract changes are as follows:

Freight

- Company and growers will share in both loading and trucking of sugar beets from outside receiving stations to the factory.
- At all stations except Ruth and Verona, company and growers will share freight costs equally (50:50). Ruth and Verona will continue to use their present freight agreement (43.5 percent

Ruth to Croswell, Verona + 10 cents over Ruth).

- Freight will be calculated from the receiving station to its home factory.

Amortization of sugar silos & juice tanks

- Amortization charges for sugar silos and juice tanks will be removed from the contract.

Two percent company premium

- The company-paid premium will be removed from the contract.

Split

- Grower share of the net proceeds will be increased from 53.1 percent to 53.5 percent.

Volume Incentive

- The company will pay an incentive to all growers when total tons purchased exceed 1,500,000 tons.

Tons purchased	
1,500,000-1,599,999	0.20/ton
1,600,000-1,699,999	0.30/ton
1,700,000-1,799,999	0.40/ton
1,800,000-1,899,999	0.50/ton
1,900,000-1,999,999	0.60/ton
2,000,000+	0.70/ton

- Incentive payment will be included in the December payment.

To put the volume incentive into perspective, between the years of 1985 and 1994, growers would have collected an incentive bonus in eight years.

The increase in the growers' percentage will mean an increase per ton year-in and year-out. ■

Michigan Immature Grain and Forage Information Exchange

In a cooperative effort kicked off in October between Michigan Farm Bureau, Michigan State University Extension and Michigan Farm Radio Network, the Michigan Immature Grain and Forage Information Exchange (MIGFIE) will assist Michigan producers in securing grain and forage resources. The free listing will carry the names of sellers and truckers willing to haul immature grain and forages.

To be placed on the MIGFIE listing, sellers should call (517) 432-1555 at MSU and ask for the MIGFIE list person or call (800) 968-3129 at Michigan Farm Bureau. Growers can also call their county Farm Bureau or MSU Extension office to be placed on the list.

The table below lists sellers and truckers who have already provided information for MIGFIE. ■

Corn Sellers	Amount	Notes	Phone
Mike Alton, Midland	10,000 bu.	24%+ moisture, Trucking available	517-631-8052
Dennis Boersen, Zeeland	500 acres	30% moisture, Trucking available	616-875-8869, after 6 p.m.
Perry Carter, Crystal	10,000 bu.	\$3/bu., 26-32% moisture, short distance trucking available	906-235-4282 early a.m. or late p.m.
Mike Day, Fairgrove	10-15,000 bu.	Trucking available within 25 mi.	517-693-6127
Dave Duyck, Essexville	4,000 bu.	\$2.50/bu., 25-30% moisture, 49-51 test wt., no trucking	517-893-4018
Newell Farms, Trufant	6,000 bu.	\$150/ton, 24% moisture, 58 test wt., trucking available	616-984-2685 (8 a.m. or 7 p.m.)
John Schneider, Dewitt	30 acres		517-669-3641
Other	Amount	Notes	Phone
Wendell Eten, Rock	150 tons alfalfa/grass	Trucking available	906-356-6290
Keith Gordy, Ionia	60 ton dry beanlage	Trucking available	616-527-3888 after 4 p.m.
Steve Goth, Grand Ledge	88 acres corn silage		517-627-5073, 8:30 a.m.
Bob Knoblock, Valparaiso, Ind.	1,700 bu. roasted soybeans	No trucking available	219-462-8755
Wendell Eten, Rock	150 tons alfalfa/grass	Trucking available	906-356-6290
Newell Farms, Trufant	1,000 bu. soybeans	14% moisture, 60 test wt., trucking available	616-984-2685 8 a.m. or 7 p.m.

Growers and processors are aiming to reverse sugar beet yield decline

Many growers in Michigan's Saginaw Valley assert that their sugar beet per-acre yields have declined by 25 percent in the past decade.

Officially, the statewide average yield dropped from 20.5 tons per acre from 145,000 acres in 1987 to 15.8 tons per acre from 190,000 acres in 1995, according to the Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service.

Once touted as the "mortgage lifter," sugar beets may be becoming a liability for farmers, and that could put Michigan's sugar beet industry at risk in the near future, according to the 25 people who met Dec. 4 in Frankenmuth to begin focusing on the problem.

The group consisted of Michigan State University Extension agronomists and agents, growers, and representatives from agribusiness and sugar beet processing companies. They are tentatively calling their effort the Sugar Beet Revitalization Initiative (SBRI).

"Our discussion identified a profusion of possibilities, and even though we don't have a consensus on what may be the problem, I do believe we are off to a good start," says Steve Poindexter, MSU Extension crops agent in Saginaw County. "When you get an industry that pulls together, there is every good chance that the problem will be solved."

Poindexter co-chaired the meeting with Harold Rouget, Extension crops agent in Tuscola County.

Among the possible problems the group discussed were soil quality, possible soil-borne pathogens, plant diseases, cultural practices, seed quality and vigor, and potential chemical and mechanical injury to the plant.

"There does not appear to be a single factor affecting the decline, so what we will do is work together to prioritize the two or three biggest factors that may be contributing to yield decline while not overlooking other factors that are affecting production systems and management," Poindexter says.

He says that the group will split into composite teams that will work with MSU Extension specialists and Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station researchers to probe each of the primary factors suspected to be affecting the yield decline.

Poindexter says that the group intends to identify and begin working on its research priorities by spring. In the meantime, the group will be reviewing current production practices that may affect yield.

"It will be a two-pronged approach: reviewing what we currently know about best management practices and getting that information to producers, and deciding what we don't know and beginning to research that," Poindexter says.

Among the educational activities planned is the Sugar Beet Symposium Feb. 25 at the Horizons Conference Center near Saginaw.

Poindexter says researchers and industry leaders from the nation's sugar beet-growing regions will be among the speakers for the program.

More information about the aspirations of the SBRI and the symposium can be obtained by calling Poindexter at 517-799-2233 or Rouget at 517-672-3870. ■



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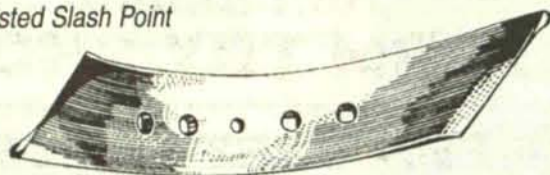
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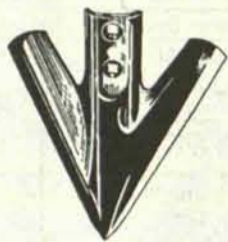
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HAY AND STRAW WANTED: Contact Keegan Hay Company, Emmett, MI 1-810-384-6620.

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05 Livestock

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05 Livestock

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05 Livestock

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05 Livestock

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05 Livestock

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09 Help Wanted

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11 Agricultural Services

FARM DRAINAGE AND EARTH WORK: Laser Construction. Surface drainage, farm lagoons, water retention basins, building pads, access roads, driveways. **Todd Haynes Carson City** 517-584-3265

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12 Business & Legal Services

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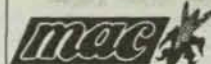
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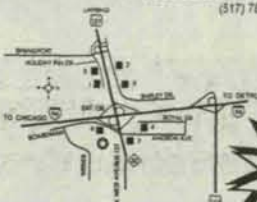
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14 **Real Estate**

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19 **General**

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19 **General**

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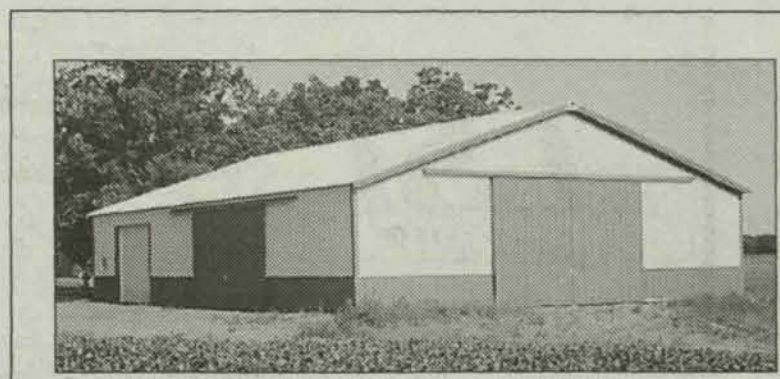
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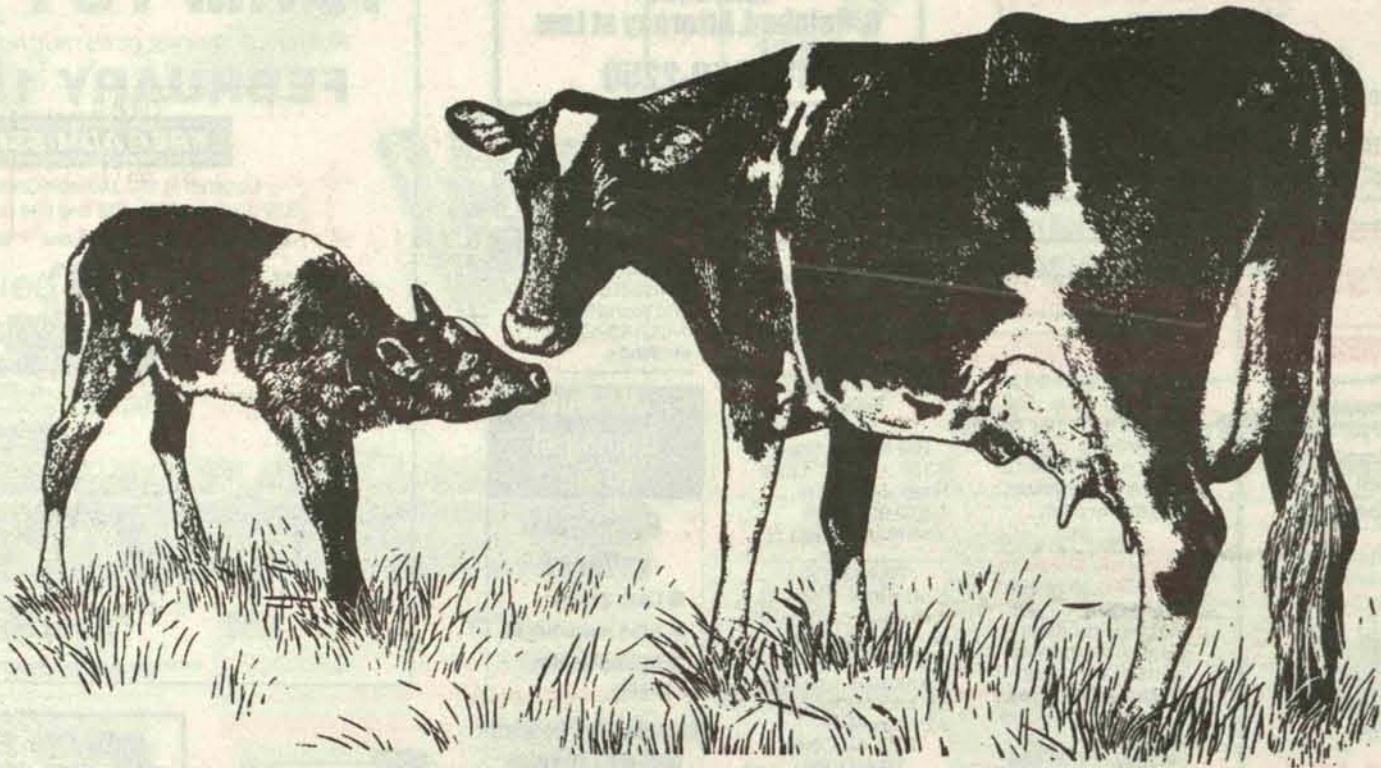
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3733 17 COMPARISONS	20.9 20.3	0.6	.683 .673	.010
3752 62 COMPARISONS	19.7 19.7	0.0	.715 .694	.021
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1996 YIELD PERFORMANCE RESULTS

PIONEER® BRAND HYBRID	YIELD	NO. OF TESTS	YIELD ADVANTAGE PER UNIT	MOISTURE ADVANTAGE	INCOME ADVANTAGE PER UNIT
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3751	136.5	104	7.9	0.0	\$67.81
3573	141.6	92	15.1	-0.2	\$130.66
3525	142.0	64	7.4	1.1	\$74.34
3489	128.1	51	3.7	-0.2	\$29.22
3394	131.2	38	4.2	0.0	\$35.81

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