

MICHIGAN FARM NEWS

MICHIGAN'S ONLY STATEWIDE FARM NEWSPAPER

MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU



MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU

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'Tis the season for Michigan-grown Christmas trees

New fruit and vegetable microbial risk guidelines proposed by the FDA

Salmonella. E. Coli. Hepatitis A. If anything, 1997 will be marked by the new era of food safety scares that have plagued the American consumer and even the American farmer.

On Dec. 1, the FDA and USDA held a "town hall meeting" of sorts to unveil and hear grower comments on newly proposed federal guidelines for fresh fruit and vegetable production as part of President Clinton's newest initiative to "Ensure the Safety of Imported and Domestic Fruits and Vegetables."

According to the memorandum, the guidelines will be the first set of specific standards for fruits and vegetables, improving the agricultural and handling practices for producers selling produce to the domestic market. Among the guidelines proposed at the early December meeting were best management practices for manure management, water quality, worker sanitation and health, field facility sanitation, and transportation and handling practices.

"We cannot deny that recently there have been some high-visibility cases associating microbiological problems with produce, either fresh or processed," explained Tom Gardine with FDA's Food Safety Initiative and the main presenter at the meeting. "We must remember, the American consumer, when they hear about a problem with apple cider, they remember apples; if they hear about it with frozen strawberries, they remember strawberries."

"The food supply in this country is the best in the world," he added. "The produce supplied is the safest in the world and the president wants to keep it this way for a number of reasons: consumer confidence — we want the American consumer to eat fresh produce because it's good for them."

"Growers certainly do recognize the stakes that they have in maintaining consumer confidence in a safe food supply," District I Director for the Michigan Farm Bureau Jim Miller told the panel assembled at the meeting. "We certainly expect these guidelines to stay as guidelines and certainly not become another layer of regulations."

One example from the 32-page guidelines suggests that employees be trained to report to the person in charge any information about their health or activities as they relate to diseases that are transmissible through food.

"We're trying to protect not only the American public here," Gardine added. "One of the phrases you heard here is the crisis of the week. We don't want continuing crises of the week with fresh produce. What happens is it ruins your crops; it

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Each year, Michigan Christmas tree growers plant approximately 1.5 million new tree seedlings to keep pace with the \$90 million industry that predominantly hinges on the Christmas season and the age-old tradition of a fresh-cut Christmas tree. In the span of a few short months, more than 4 million trees are shipped throughout the hemisphere.

No resolution in sight for Michigan's dairy superpool

Concern expressed by producers over increasing price spread between pay price and value to processors

Although many dairy farmers haven't yet felt the loss of Michigan's over-order premium "superpool," they will soon. Future monthly milk checks will reflect hundreds of dollars less due to the collapse of the voluntary superpool on Dec. 1, according to MFB Dairy Specialist Kevin Kirk.

"To an average dairy farmer, it's from \$400 to \$800 a month of over-order premium," explained Kirk. "That's roughly \$5,000 a year solely derived from the willingness of the cooperatives and processors in this state to participate in the voluntary over-order premium program."

MDA Director Dan Wyant recently met with all the processors including Chicago's Dean Foods to see if there was a willingness to put the pool together. "Dean is willing to come to Michigan in the month of December, sit down and talk about and negotiate the details and the specifics of a voluntary pool arrangement," he said. "They're open to it, and they recognize the value of it. In fact, they indicated they participate in a half a dozen other voluntary pools currently around the country."

Michigan was the first state in the late '50s to create a premium program that priced milk over the federal milk market order, which was known as the first state superpool. All fluid milk processed in the Lower Peninsula of the state shared in the premiums generated by fluid milk use.

"Five years ago the pool fell apart and we operated the dairy industry in Michigan for over six months without a pool in place," Kirk said. "A voluntary pool was finally put together here again

because of the threat of a potential state order mandated by the Legislature."

The bone of contention around the collapse of Michigan's superpool revolves around milk used for other products besides bottled milk.

"The debate as it was five years ago is the milk going to Class III utilization (cheese, butter, powdered milk usage), Kirk said. "Cooperatives contend that they need some compensation for that milk. The other participants say 'no,' they want to participate only if Class I (fluid milk) and II (cottage cheese, yogurt, ice cream, dips) are included in the superpool. Processors supplying fluid milk also want assistance for maintaining that market."

Recent changes in pricing structures, primarily volume incentives, prompted the failure of the voluntary pool, according to Kirk. "Non-cooperative processors and handlers lost some producers," he said. "The big challenge was the fact that all of a sudden producers were jumping ship, bailing out, moving around, and it was causing too much uncertainty and too much instability in the industry."

"We've got a whole series of issues," Wyant said, "ranging from whether Class III milk is included in the pool, to investments into cheese plants and the risks taken. The issue now will be, is there any common ground in there?"

"The only way the superpool can be resurrected is to include Class I and Class II milk," Kirk explained.

Is there room in milk pricing for a superpool?

According to numbers recently released by Michigan State University's Agricultural Economics Department, the cooperative's nominal price de-

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COVER STORY \$90 million generated annually by trees

Ahh, the fresh scent of a newly-sawed evergreen tree evokes memories of Christmases past, but maybe you didn't know that the age-old tradition is a \$90 million industry for our state.

Beginning in October, more than 900 Michigan Christmas tree growers began their work harvesting millions of trees, putting Michigan second to Oregon in total production. Michigan, however, raises 13 varieties of evergreen Christmas trees more than any other state.

"We really are seeing a trend toward the real tree again," said Michigan Christmas Tree Association Executive Director Laurie Koelling. "We had seen an upswell using artificial trees, but people are now looking for something to do with their families and going back to that tradition of getting a real tree, either off a lot or a choose-and-cut farm."

The five leading Michigan counties for commercial Christmas tree production were in the northwest: Wexford, Missaukee, Oceana, Kalkaska and Montcalm. These five counties alone account for 45 percent of Michigan's Christmas trees.

"Scotch pine put Michigan on the map for Christmas tree production," Koelling added. "We still do a lot of Douglas fir which is over in the Hart-Manton area." Many growers have the Fraser fir in the ground, which has seen increasing demand along with the old stand by white pine and blue spruce, she added.

"Everyone plants their crop," Koelling said. "We do it on a 10-year schedule, so we're having to forecast 10 years ahead what type of tree the public is going to demand. There is a lot of physical labor

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News in Brief



From the President

Accepting the challenge and the opportunities of term limits

There's a significant challenge for Michigan Farm Bureau and all of agriculture regarding the impact of term limits. Sixty-five members of the Michigan House of Representatives — that's almost 60 percent — will not be able to seek re-election in 1998, meaning that at least 65 new representatives will be elected next November.

Many of the incumbents who will not be eligible for reelection have been proven friends of agriculture. Much of what we have accomplished has been because of the strong partnerships we forged with representatives who understood agriculture, our grass-roots policy development process, and were willing to support our organizational policy objectives.

The stakes are too high for us to wait and see who decides to seek office. We must begin now to identify candidates who are interested in our industry — candidates who understand agriculture and are willing to work with Farm Bureau.

As recently as Nov. 26, 17 of these open districts had no candidate filings and many of the other districts had only one candidate currently seeking election. This means that Farm Bureau members have many opportunities themselves to file as candidates or to encourage others to file.

I would challenge you to attend your next county Farm Bureau board meeting to discuss this issue. You may not be in one of the open districts in 1998, but you will be in 2000. Talk to your current legislators and ask them who may be considering running. Take time to make a list of potential candidates and begin contacting them to encourage their candidacy.

In September of this year, Michigan Farm Bureau conducted a campaign managers' workshop designed to help train those who are seeking office. We had more than a dozen participants who learned about everything from campaign financing to dealing with the media. This type of training is critical for political success. Let me assure you that the state organization stands ready to assist in any way we can to support your efforts on the local level.

You may recall that Farm Bureau supported term limits for elected officials. We must be willing to step forward and deal with the consequences of that decision. Our organizational structure is perfectly suited to surface, train and support successful candidates. By developing a relationship early on, we will be able to have even greater influence once a candidate is elected to office.

The effort to identify and encourage candidates must be given attention now. We cannot wait until next spring. The success of MFB's AgriPAC Committee has always been our grass-roots involvement. I encourage you to continue that level of commitment by utilizing your county Farm Bureau to surface and support candidates for the 1998 election that will indeed be "Friends of Agriculture!"

Sincerely,

Jack Laurie

Jack Laurie, President
Michigan Farm Bureau

Chile opens market to U.S. wheat

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman today announced that Chile will allow the importation of U.S. wheat that originates from areas surveyed and found free of Karnal bunt.

"The decision to allow U.S. wheat into Chile is a tremendous trade success," said Glickman. "It is also another example of how this Administration is striving to recognize and implement World Trade Organization Sanitary and Phytosanitary principles and standards."

Chile has agreed to accept U.S. wheat for consumption based upon Servicio Agrícola y Ganadero (SAG) officials' technical review of the Karnal bunt program and the additional declaration attesting that wheat originated from an area that was surveyed and found free of Karnal bunt.

This regulatory modification will be implemented in mid-October, and SAG reserves the right to inspect all agricultural commodities entering Chile. Inspection of U.S. wheat for Karnal bunt will

be based upon the detection of bunted kernels. The Karnal bunt program is the responsibility of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, a part of the marketing and regulatory programs mission area.

"USDA has taken every precaution to ensure Chile is satisfied with our measures to establish pest free zones for Karnal bunt and apple maggot," said Michael V. Dunn, assistant secretary of marketing and regulatory programs.

Historically, Chile has imported several hundred thousand metric tons of U.S. wheat each year, and it was estimated that in 1997-98 Chile would import 750,000 metric tons of U.S. wheat.

Chile has also agreed to recognize 27 counties in California and 10 counties in Washington as free from apple maggot. For counties not recognized as free of the pest, SAG is requiring that the fruit be cold treated and that the first export treatments be verified onsite by SAG technicians.

Michigan dairy producers approve continuance

Michigan dairy producers have approved a referendum for the continuation of the Michigan Dairy Market Program for Grade A milk, according to Dan Wyant, director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA).

Michigan dairy producers approved the referendum to continue the Michigan Dairy Market Program for an additional five years beginning Jan. 1, 1998, and ending Dec. 31, 2002. A total of 770 ballots were received in the referendum, which was conducted by MDA from Oct. 20-31, 1997. Ninety-three ballots were disqualified as incomplete, unverifiable or were postmarked after Oct. 31. Of the remaining 677 ballots, 582 producers voted yes

(86 percent) representing 1,052,807,341 pounds of milk (88 percent) and 95 producers voted no (14 percent) representing 137,354,282 pounds of milk (12 percent).

The current assessment rate is 10 cents per hundredweight.

The law requires that more than 50 percent of the voting producers, representing over 50 percent of the volume of milk sold by those voting, must approve the referendum for passage.

Additional information about the referendum may be obtained by contacting MDA's Marketing and Communications Division at (517) 373-1104.

Man pleads guilty in fruit hepatitis case

Frederick Williamson, former president of Andrew & Williamson Sales Co. of San Diego, pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court for lying and other counts relating to the company's purchase of strawberries from Mexico. The strawberries, served in school lunches, were believed to be the source of a hepatitis outbreak this past spring in several states, including Michigan.

Several students and teachers fell ill after eating the tainted strawberries. It was determined that

the fruit came from Williamson's distribution center. Williamson told federal authorities at the time the fruit was domestically grown. It is required that any product sold to school lunch programs be domestically grown.

Andrew & Williamson must pay \$1.3 million in civil damages and a \$200,000 criminal fine over five years. The company also will have to pay an undetermined sum to states for cleanup, damages and the cost of destroying berries.

Midwest dairy industry shrinking

The Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago said recently that the Midwest dairy industry may be facing some tough sledding in the future. Small farmers, the bank says, are leaving the business due to competition and eroding government price supports.

"Many, typically smaller, dairy farmers continue to exit the industry, while a few others are expanding in hopes of achieving lower per-unit costs of production," said Gary Benjamin, economic adviser and vice president at the Chicago Fed.

"A domestic market whose needs can be met with fewer dairy cows held by lower-cost producers implies the restructuring process will continue,

at least until export markets open up more and the U.S. is able to establish a foothold as a low-cost producer for the world dairy market," Benjamin said.

The number of dairy cows in the Chicago bank's district — Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Wisconsin and Michigan — during September was down 3 percent from a year ago, and down 6 percent from two years ago, Benjamin said.

Meanwhile, dairy cow numbers in the five key "growth states" — Arizona, California, Florida, Idaho, and New Mexico — rose 4 percent from a year earlier and 6 percent in two years.

U.S. bans Belgian livestock and meat imports

In response to the discovery of a case of mad cow disease — bovine spongiform encephalopathy — in Belgium, the Agriculture Department has banned all imports of cattle, sheep, their meat and other related products from that country. Despite the fact that Belgium is not a major exporter of meat to the United States, USDA says "this emergency measure was taken to protect animal and public health."

No cases of mad cow disease have ever been discovered in the United States. Recently, the Food and Drug Administration announced plans to set up

an on-farm monitoring system to prevent an outbreak of the disease in the United States.

At least 20 people, mostly from Britain, have died as a result of the human brain disorder Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, which has been linked to the consumption of beef from cattle afflicted with mad cow disease.

The United States also has banned imports of animals and meat from Britain, France, Ireland, Oman, Portugal, Switzerland and the Netherlands, due to BSE cases.

Tractor sales up during October

U.S. sales of farm tractors rose 0.6 percent to 11,793 during October versus the same month in 1996, the Equipment Manufacturers Institute said recently. The institute said in a news

release that, for the year to date, sales of farm tractors totaled 109,354, an increase of 11 percent compared with the first 10 months of 1996.

ORGANIZATIONAL BRIEFS

Vander Molen appointed Chief Operating Officer

John Vander Molen was promoted to chief operating officer for the Michigan Farm Bureau, effective Dec. 1, 1997, by the MFB board of directors. A member of the Michigan Farm Bureau family for 21 years, Vander Molen served three years as a regional representative, eight years as the manager of the Member Services Department, and 10 years as director of the Field Operations Division.

As chief operating officer, Vander Molen will plan, direct and supervise the business affairs of Michigan Farm Bureau through the initiation and recommendation of plans and programs for efficient operations, sound growth and orderly

expansion of the organization.

Vander Molen graduated Magna Cum Laude from Western Michigan University with a degree in agricultural distribution. He and his wife, Barbara, live in Charlotte. They have three adult children, David, Anne and Sarah.



John Vander Molen

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Capitol Corner

STATE

Truck weights for agricultural haulers

Senator Leon Stille (R) has sponsored S.B. 816 establishing new truck weights for agricultural haulers.

Currently, trucks with a gross vehicle weight of 80,000 pounds are allowed on highways and interstates in Michigan. Heavier trucks of up to 164,000 pounds are also allowed on highways and interstates in Michigan provided they meet strict axle weight requirements. Unfortunately, state law restricts truck weights to 73,280 pounds on county roads, unless county road commissions specifically permit heavier trucks on county roads. Although most counties allow heavier trucks on county roads, this restriction has caused major problems in some counties.

The availability of trucks is crucial to the transportation of such commodities as grain, sugar beets, milk, potatoes and cherries. Some of these commodities are seasonal and perishable, such as sugar beets and potatoes. The timely movement of these commodities is critical to agriculture. When county road commissions do not allow trucks on county roads that are allowed on state roads, this has a negative impact on agricultural profits.

Another significant economic factor to many farmers is that trucks allowed on state roads are used to supply fuel, fertilizer, feed and other agricul-

tural inputs. Many of these units are custom built. In some instances, these trucks have come from out-of-state to deliver these inputs. They cannot legally deliver these inputs to a Michigan farm if county road commissions do not allow these trucks on county roads.

Finally, seasonal weight restrictions have increasingly caused problems for the timely delivery of perishable commodities, such as milk. While trucks cannot be allowed on all roads during the freeze-thaw season, it is an economic necessity for highly perishable commodities to be delivered to the processor.

S.B. 816 would allow trucks hauling agricultural commodities of up to 164,000 pounds on county roads. These trucks must, however, meet the states stringent axle weight requirements. In addition, the state transportation department and county road commissions must grant exemptions from seasonal weight restrictions for the hauling of agricultural commodities on specified routes when requested in writing.

Status: Senate Agriculture and Forestry Committee

MFB Position: MFB Supports S.B. 816.

MFB Contact: Tim Goodrich, ext. 2048

IRS proposal would penalize farmers

The Internal Revenue Service has proposed changes in the uniform capitalization (UNICAP) rules for farmers that could adversely affect Michigan fruit and nursery farmers. UNICAP rules determine if pre-productive expenses can be deducted immediately or whether the expenses have to be depreciated over the life of a plant or animal.

UNICAP rules apply to farmers who grow plants with a pre-productive cycle of more than two years and to producers of plants and animals who are required to use accrual accounting, according to Ken Nye, director of Michigan Farm Bureau's Commodity and Environmental Division. They do not apply to dairy and livestock farmers who are not required to use accrual accounting.

"The proposed expansion of expenses covered by UNICAP will increase taxes for producers because they will have to wait longer to deduct expenses," Nye said. "That's particularly bad news for orchard operators who have a tremendous amount invested in the establishment of new apple and cherry orchards. Those new orchards generally must sit idle for three to five years before they generate a single dollar in revenue."

Under current IRS rules, affected producers must capitalize "preparatory" expenditures, which include the costs of clearing, leveling and grading land; drilling and equipping wells or acquiring irrigation systems; seeds, seedlings, and budding trees; and acquiring animals.

STATE

Product liability lawsuits

Reps. Baird (D-Okemos), Bogardus (D-Davison) and Wallace (D-Detroit) have sponsored H.B. 5371, H.B. 5372, and H.B. 5373 respectively to address product liability lawsuit concerns.

In 1995, Gov. Engler signed into law sweeping product liability reforms that helped protect manufacturers, small business, and agribusiness from frivolous lawsuits. Specifically, the law eliminated "venue shopping," capped pain and suffering damages, and protected manufacturers and sellers from lawsuits if the product met federal and state standards or if the product was used in a manner in which it was not intended.

HB 5371, 5372 and 5373 are intended to make it easier for individuals to sue manufacturers, small businesses and agribusiness. Specifically, the bills:

- Require the jury to determine when a product is defective. Currently, a judge makes this determination.
- Permit lawsuits if a person that manufactured or distributed a product should have known the product was defective. Currently, a person cannot be sued unless he or she actually knew the product was defective.
- Make it a criminal offense to manufacture or distribute an "unnecessarily hazardous" product. This crime would apply if a person made a false or misleading statement about the product, even though the person may not have known they were making a false or misleading statement.
- Allow punitive damages against a person in a personal injury action. This allows the court to award damages above and beyond economic and non-economic damages. Current Michigan law prohibits punitive damages.

MFB Position: Farm Bureau opposes H.B. 5371, H.B. 5372, and H.B. 5373. In an already overly litigious society, these bills move in the wrong direction. They will result in increased lawsuits, thus costing Farm Bureau members excessive amounts of time and money.

MFB Contact: Tim Goodrich, ext. 2048

Gene may lead to more efficient corn

Researchers at Southern Illinois University say that a gene extracted from soil bacteria can be harnessed to improve corn's ability to process fertilizers. The development could be worth millions in extra revenue for farmers while reducing potential environmental impacts.

The genetically altered plant "soaks up" more nitrogen than traditional corn hybrids, resulting in higher protein yields and less fertilizer runoff, said biotechnologist David Lightfoot, who began his work with the gene in 1981.

"When the plants first emerge, there's oodles and oodles of nitrogen around and the plant isn't equipped to deal with that. By equipping it with this gene, the plant absorbs more, so less escapes," Lightfoot said. Field trials indicate that corn plants containing a gene known as GDH, or glutamate dehydrogenase, grows 10 percent bigger and has about 7 percent more protein than unaltered hybrids. The plants also reduce fertilizer residues left in and on the soil by up to 50 percent, Lightfoot said.

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Station	City	Frequency	Morning Report	Noon Report
WABJ	Adrian	1490	5:45 am	11:05-12:00 pm
WATZ	Alpena	1450	5:30 am	11:30 am
WTKA	Ann Arbor	1050	6:05 am	12:00-1:00 pm
WLEW	Bad Axe	1340	6:30 am	12:50 pm
WKJF	Cadillac	1370	5:45 am	11:10 am
WKYO	Caro	1360	6:15 am	12:10-1:00 pm
WTVB	Coldwater	1590	5:45 am	12:00-1:00 pm
WDOW	Dowagiac	1440	6:05 am	12:15 pm
WGHN AM	Grand Haven	1370	5:45 am	12:15 pm
WGHN FM	Grand Haven	92.1	5:45 am	12:15 pm
WPLB	Greenville	1380	6:15 am	11:50 am
WBCH	Hastings	1220	6:15 am	12:30 pm
WCSR	Hillsdale	1340	6:45 am	12:45 pm
WHTC	Holland	1450		12:15 pm
WION	Ionia	1430	6:45 am	12:30-1:00 pm
WKHM	Jackson	970	5:45-6:00 am	12:30-1:00 pm
WKZO	Kalamazoo	590	5:00-6:00 am	12:00-1:00 pm
WPLB FM	Lakeview	106.3	6:15 am	12:15 pm
WOAP	Owosso	1080	7:15 am	12:40 pm
WHAK	Rogers City	960		12:15 pm
WMLM	St. Louis	1520	6:05 am	12:20 pm
WSGW	Saginaw	790	5:55 am	11:30-12:30 pm
WMIC	Sandusky	660	6:15 am	12:45 pm
WKJC FM	Tawas City	104.7		12:40 pm
WLKM	Three Rivers	1510	5:45 am	12:15 pm
WTCM	Traverse City	580	5:45 am	11:10 am

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Further guidelines set for food safety

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ruins your crop for the entire season, and it takes you a full season to recover from it."

The growers who testified before the group still expressed a certain level of concern that the proposed guidelines, broad and general as they may be, could be the beginning of more red tape to come.

"One thing you've got to get through to the agricultural community is that FDA, as we know, is a regulatory agency, not a recommendatory agency," explained Dan Hill, chairman of the Fruit and Vegetable Advisory Committee for Farm Bureau and a member of Michigan's Vegetable Council. "Anytime we see something in writing from the FDA, we figure it's a regulation waiting to happen."

"There is no hidden agenda," Gardine emphasized. "No secret plan to turn this into a regulation. We believe the way to work with this is through putting out the best guidance based on current science."

FDA guidelines vs. Right-to-Farm

Questions about the need for further guidelines came up often given the fact that Michigan already has the Right-to-Farm law on the books outlining generally accepted agricultural management practices for manure, pesticide and nutrient management.

"I really don't see any major areas of conflict," explained Kurt Thelen, director of MDA's Environmental Stewardship Division, which manages Michigan's Right-to-Farm. "They're really looking from different

perspectives. One's really food safety-based, and ours are more environmentally and nuisance-based.

"Many of the things that we do to protect water quality also are protective of public health and food safety," he added. "The one comment I made in here was that perhaps these particular guidelines for food safety should reference some of the work that individual states have done with respect to water protection, manure management, some of the things we already cover under our Right-to-Farm practices."

"One of the things we pointed out many times during our presentation," Gardine explained, "is the guidance document does not supersede local law, local requirement, local regulation — be that an existing federal regulation that is already on the books, a state requirement, or a local requirement."

The Michigan town meeting was the first of six to be held around the country until Dec. 19. After that point, the guidelines may be revised, based upon the testimony and any written comments received by the FDA, and published in the *Federal Register*. Once they are published in the register, another 45-day comment period will begin for any final notes to be submitted.

"If they have thoughts and comments they want to share, get it in to us," Gardine said. "We would hope that the farmers recognize the importance of microbial safety in the production of fresh produce for their consumers, the American public who purchases their products, and for their business." ■

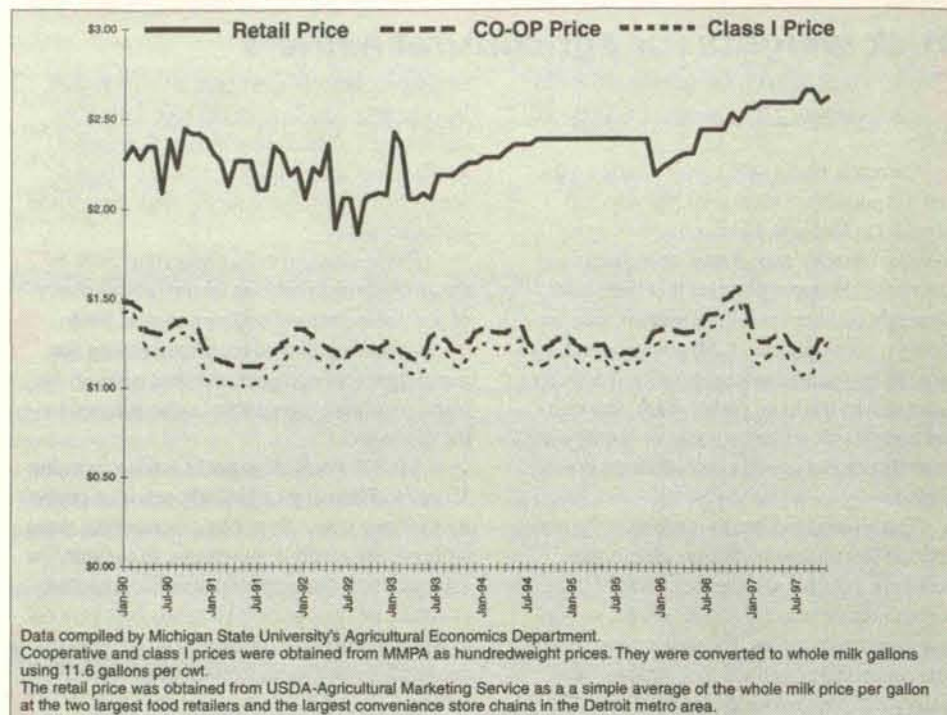
Dairy farmers will soon be feeling pinch

Continued from page 1

creased from \$1.48 per gallon in 1990 to \$1.34 per gallon in 1997, while retail prices of milk grew from \$2.31 per gallon to \$2.62 per gallon.

"Over the last seven years when you take a look at the cooperative's price," explained Kirk, "it's

dropped roughly 10 to 11 percent while, at the same time, the retail price has increased over 13 percent. That's a substantial margin, so that means there is room to demand an over-order premium and return it back to the producers." ■



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Market Outlook

by Dr. Jim Hilker,
Department of
Agricultural
Economics, Michigan
State University



Seasonal Commodity Price Trends

Corn	↔
Soybeans	↑↓
Wheat	↔
Hogs	↔
Cattle	↔

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

ports. My guess is that we will see exports pick up next spring from the present pace, but that they won't make it back to previous expectations.

The local basis is not overly strong and the spread between futures indicates the market will pay on-farm storage. But there is no compelling reason that prices will rebound rapidly. Those with the where-with-all may consider storing 20 to 45 percent on-farm for a spring rally. Others may want to move a higher percentage and consider getting back in the market later with call options if an optimistic urge hits them.

WHEAT

As evidenced by prices, the wheat market is not the hot place to be. As Table 2 shows, projected use is up 100 million bushels, but ending stocks are expected to be up 220 million bushels, and prices reflect that. Fundamentals suggest prices for the year around \$3.50, and we have already seen that is the case. Without some unexpected production problems somewhere in the Southern Hemisphere, I suspect we won't see much price movement before spring.

It will be interesting to see what the winter wheat planting numbers were as of Dec. 1, which will be released around Jan. 12. The condition of the winter wheat crop is quite good for the country as a whole. If something does spark the wheat market, and July futures head back towards \$4, consider pricing some 1998 wheat.

SOYBEANS

The up, down projections for the soybean market continues to do quite well. Demand continues to be very strong, but we (the market) continue to be unsure of just how strong, although we are quite sure it's somewhere between very strong and very very strong. Crush for both U.S. use and exports continue to outpace projections, even with significant year-to-year increases in the estimates.

And exports of raw beans continue on a pace to meet the sharp increases in export projections.

As usual, South America is the wildcard this time of year. Plantings seem to have gone fairly well which was a big factor in tempering the soybean market after a nice rally. As we move into use levels not seen before, and as we go through the South American growing season with El Nino concerns, volatility in the market is the most likely scenario.

As we have discussed for several issues, the market will not likely pay for storage due to basis tightening for on-farm or off-farm. Therefore, "no farmers have beans in storage, so as not to incur storage costs, anywhere in Michigan," yeah, right. Again, this is not to say we can't be in the soybean market, just be in it with a basis contract or futures, not cash beans. Any questions?

CATTLE

While placements were down in October and are expected to be down in November, numbers on feed are still large and expected to be large for a month or two into the new year. With demand being mediocre at best, prices will stay in the same mid \$60s until this excess is through the market.

Feeder prices have been fairly strong recently, but the strength came too late for Michigan feeder auctions. However, the strength is expected to stay from this point on for the next couple of years as cow numbers continue to shrink, fed prices recover, and most likely feed prices over the next couple of years hold even or drop. The question isn't whether beef cow numbers will be down in the Jan. 1 count to be released the end of January, but rather how much they will be down for the country as a whole.

HOGS

The last time we had slaughter numbers near the levels we have seen this fall was the fall of 1994 and prices fell well under \$30. What's the difference? There are two main factors, capacity and demand. In 1994, there wasn't enough slaughter capacity to handle the huge number. Now due to some new plants coming on line there are more than enough packing plants. Prices probably would not have fallen under \$36 to \$39 if there had been sufficient capacity at that time. The reason that prices are in the mid \$40s at this time, compared to

the \$36 to \$39, is increased utilization, including exports.

While exports in 1997 have been strong relative to any time other than the spring of 1996, they have not met expectations, especially to Japan. A combination of a stronger U.S. dollar and tastes and preference considerations have kept the United States from exporting as much pork to Japan as expected after foot-and-mouth disease hit Taiwan. However, the U.S. share of imports has increased.

The Dec. 1 Hogs and Pigs Report will be released Dec. 29. It will help confirm whether or not pork production will be up 8 percent in 1998.

DAIRY

by Larry G. Hamm

The future of milk pricing mechanisms are in a state of great confusion. However, the milk markets continue to show strength. The results of these two factors lead to the proverbial good news/bad news scenario.

The good news is that wholesale cheese markets, particularly, for 40 pound blocks of cheddar cheese have held their strength through the month of November. This, combined with stable butterfat prices on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME), means that the November Basic Formula Price (BFP) increased over its October level of \$12.83 per hundredweight (cwt.) at 3.5 percent test. The November BFP is \$12.96. The 13-cent increase in BFP means that the fundamental base under U.S. dairy markets is likely to hold for the next month or two.

The seasonal weakening of dairy product markets will likely occur in the next month or two. However, currently the fundamental market indicators seem to suggest a more limited decline in dairy product prices. One important market fundamental is the amount of commercial and government storage holdings of natural American cheese. In August 1997 for example, U.S. warehouses had in storage 78 million more pounds of natural American cheese than they did in August 1996. This extra 78 million pounds of cheese overhanging the dairy markets was largely responsible for the large drops in the BFP experienced earlier this summer. The latest USDA cold storage statistics show that for October 1997, cold storage inventories of natural American cheese are only 20 million pounds higher than their October 1996 levels. It appears from these National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) figures that the large stored cheese overhang on the dairy markets has been whittled down. This bodes optimism for the level of seasonal price adjustment likely to be seen in the next few months.

If that is the good news, the bad news is that the pricing mechanisms by which farm pay prices are calculated are still up in the air. As has been widely reported, a federal district judge in Minneapolis voided milk pricing elements from a significant market number of Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO) areas in the United States. The ruling has cast confusion as to whether FMMO administrators can use the long-established pricing procedures in the FMMOs to determine a uniform price for producers. It may take several more weeks to clear the confusion caused by the judge's order. In the meantime, it is not exactly clear how individual producer prices and checks will be calculated in the months ahead.

In conclusion, the good news is that although seasonal milk price declines are on the way, they may be somewhat more moderate this year than in past. The bad news is that it is unclear exactly what procedures will be used to calculate producer pay prices in the future.

Herbicide Errors

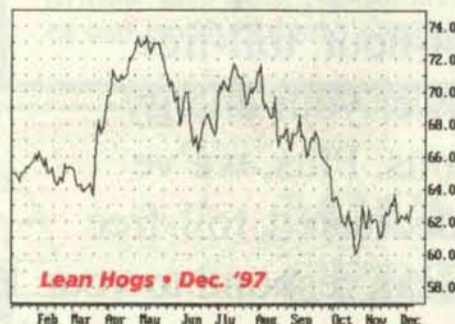
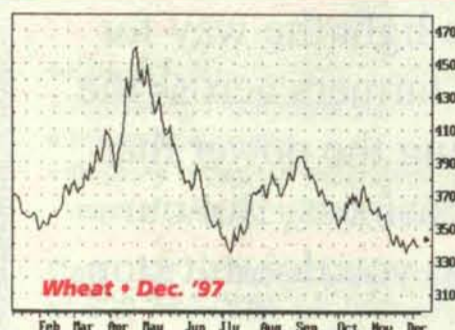
Monsanto Company has advised our customers of an error in certain printed label booklets for Roundup Herbicide (EPA Reg. No., 524-445)/(This notice does NOT affect either Roundup Ultra or Roundup Pro herbicides). The error refers to an incorrect "4-hour" Reentry Interval (REI) printed on a portion of Roundup Herbicide label booklets identified on the cover at "1996-1 (print plate) 21001U2-28/53." The correct REI for this product is "12 hours" as reviewed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

If you have purchased Roundup Herbicide after August 1, 1997, this notice will not apply to you. However, if you purchased Roundup (not Roundup ULTRA nor PRO) herbicide in 1997 prior to August 1, 1997, we ask that you follow the guidelines listed below.

1. Check for any remaining product in your inventory with a label booklet bearing the numbers: "1996-1 (print plate) 21001U2-28/53."

2. If you possess such product, please call the Monsanto Consumer Response Center at 1-800-325-1224 for instructions to obtain the proper labeling from the manufacturer. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused our customers.

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	79.5	80.2
Acres harvested	65.0	73.1	74.0
Bu./harvested acre	113.5	127.1	126.4
Stocks (million bushels)			
Beginning stocks	1,558	426	884
Production	7,374	9,293	9,359
Imports	16	13	10
Total supply	8,948	9,732	10,253
Use:			
Feed and residual	4,696	5,362	5,640
Food/seed & ind. uses	1,598	1,691	1,775
Total domestic	6,294	7,053	7,415
Exports	2,228	1,795	1,875
Total use	8,522	8,848	9,290
Ending stocks	426	884	963
Ending stocks, % of use	5.0	10.0	10.4
Regular loan rate	\$1.89	\$1.89	\$1.89
U.S. season average			
Farm price, \$/bu.	\$3.24	\$2.70	\$2.60

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	69.1	75.6	70.8
Acres harvested	60.9	62.9	63.5
Bu./harvested acre	35.8	36.3	39.7
Stocks (million bushels)			
Beginning stocks	507	376	444
Production	2,182	2,285	2,526
Imports	68	92	95
Total supply	2,757	2,753	3,065
Use:			
Food	883	891	910
Seed	104	103	100
Feed	153	314	325
Total domestic	1,140	1,308	1,335
Exports	1,241	1,001	1,075
Total use	2,381	2,309	2,410
Ending stocks	376	444	655
Ending stocks, % of use	15.8	19.2	27.1
Regular loan rate	\$2.58	\$2.58	\$2.58
U.S. season average			
Farm price, \$/bu.	\$4.55	\$4.30	\$3.50

Table 3 — Soybeans

(Million acres)	Estimated 1995-1996	Projected 1996-1997	Hilker 1997-1998
Acres planted	62.6	64.2	70.9
Acres harvested	61.6	63.4	69.8
Bu./harvested acre	35.3	37.6	39.0
Stocks (million bushels)			
Beginning stocks	335	183	132
Production	2,177	2,383	2,736
Imports	4	9	4
Total supply	2,516	2,575	2,872
Use:			
Crushings	1,370	1,436	1,520
Exports	851	882	975
Seed, feed & residuals	112	125	137
Total use	2,333	2,443	2,632
Ending stocks	183	132	240
Ending stocks, % of use	7.8	5.4	9.1
Regular loan rate	\$4.92	\$4.97	\$5.26
U.S. season average			
Farm price, \$/bu.	\$6.72	\$7.38	\$6.70

Source: Knight Ridder Financial

Source: USDA and Jim Hilker

Michigan State University's National Food Safety and Toxicology Center opens for business

by Kris Totzke

The recently completed, 115,000-square-foot Food Safety and Toxicology Building at Michigan State University (MSU) will house the National Food Safety and Toxicology Center.

Dedicated Oct. 24, the center seeks to develop a safer food supply, well-rounded public policy and a greater public understanding of food safety issues. It will assess and identify hazards, develop management techniques for handling these hazards and then communicate its research findings to the public.

Dr. Robert Hollingworth, National Food Safety and Toxicology Center director, said the center could be traced back to historical Michigan concerns over the safety of its food supply.

"Over the years, we've had funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), in particular, to look at food safety issues that arose from Michigan concerns," he said.

The impact came in 1989 after USDA appropriated \$25 million, through the efforts of then-Congressman Bob Traxler, to construct and establish a program for the new food safety and toxicology center.

"We've been building it ever since," said Hollingworth, a 10-year toxicologist with an interest in pesticides. "This is the second of our two buildings. We have a very advanced animal and aquatic research facility that was built first, and now this lab facility."

The center's 52,000-square-foot Animal Research Containment Facility provides an environment for complete containment of hazards and strict control of emissions.

During the dedication ceremonies, Gov. John Engler announced a cross-department team of scientists, epidemiologists, veterinarians and physicians is being formed to respond swiftly to outbreaks of suspected food-borne illness in Michigan.

Called the Special Actions for Food Emergencies (SAFE) Team, the group of professionals from Michigan Department of Agriculture and Michigan Department of Community Health will be mobilized whenever there is a threat to human health involving the food supply.

"The two agencies have already had an extraordinary and successful partnership in handling food safety emergencies," Engler said. "The development of the SAFE Team formalizes and strengthens that relationship, ensuring food supply threats will be prevented or minimized."

Prevention and minimization are also the main mission of the National Food Safety and Toxicology Center. Located behind the Plant and Soil Science



Residing just south of the agricultural department on Farm Lane, is the new Food Safety & Toxicology Building.

Building's greenhouses on MSU's campus, the center appears to be one of a kind.

"There's nothing quite identical to this," Hollingworth said. He said one or two national centers exist and one is forming at University of Maryland to focus on food safety issues.

"I hate to separate us from the others, but our mission is to look at food safety issues right across the whole spectrum of the food chain," Hollingworth

said. "That includes pre-harvest food safety situations occurring on the farm or at producer level, processing and packaging, retail, and increasingly, in food service, where at least 50 percent of the meals people eat are prepared outside the home."

Hollingworth, who is also director of the Pesticide Research Center, said the Food and Drug Administration has a center in Illinois, and Texas A&M is hoping for one more like MSU's.

Food safety issues can arise at any stage, or more than one. He said the whole food system needs to be looked at to understand where the best place is to intervene so safety can be increased.

The National Food Safety and Toxicology Center will look at microbiological hazards, food chemistry, epidemiology and toxicology. Toxicology studies poisons and their effects. Epidemiology is a branch of medical science dealing with incidence, distribution and control of disease within a population.

"We've been familiar with pesticide issues for quite awhile, and now we see things like *E. coli* and *Salmonella*," Hollingworth said. "Essentially, we're seeing a number of these problems trace back to the farm, either in animal or plant production."

While researching, the center's main goal is to help producers produce a safer product.

"We want to help solve those problems occurring at farm level and reduce their impact," he said. "So, pre-harvest, which is really what we're talking about, is a very significant focus for what we are doing."

According to the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, up to 81 million cases of foodborne illness occur each year, including up to 2.5 million cases in Michigan. Nationwide, the total costs associated with food poisoning are estimated to be \$23 billion. ■

National Food Safety and Toxicology Center's Scope of Activities

■ **Toxicology Research** – The relative risk of dietary exposure to natural and man-made chemicals and their public policy and health implications will be evaluated. Interests include cancer-producing substances, immunity to poisons and their effects, and hormonal dysfunction.

■ **Microbial Pathogens** – The center focuses its efforts primarily on *Campylobacter*, *Cryptosporidium* and *E. coli*. Subjects of research interest include detection, passage from farm to human populations, drug resistance, risk assessment, and chronic effects of infection.

■ **Analytical and Food Chemistry** – Special expertise subjects include: trace analysis of pesticides; substances that produce fungus and mold; natural products; metals; and persistent compounds belonging to the chlorinated hydrocarbon pesticides, such as DDT.

■ **Epidemiology** – Working closely with MSU's Department of Epidemiology, the center is developing research programs on the epidemiology of food-borne infectious diseases, the role of animals and fish in their transmission and long-term effects of exposure to organochlorines, or substances belonging to the chlorinated hydrocarbon pesticides.

■ **Public Policy** – The center's areas of focus include the effects on international commerce of trade barriers based on food safety issues, consumer perceptions of food risks, and the scientific basis of regulatory policy toward chemical and microbial hazards.

■ **Outreach and Education** – The center intends to provide science-based, unbiased information and education on issues relating to food safety to both the public and food professionals.



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MCA annual meeting scheduled as part of agricultural conference

The fourth annual Michigan Agricultural Mega Conference is scheduled for Jan. 19-21, 1998. During the three-day conference, the six hosting organizations will hold their member/annual meetings. Among these groups is the Michigan Cattlemen's Association (MCA), which is planning its annual meeting for Tuesday, Jan. 20, from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Scheduled to speak at the annual meeting is MCA board member Monte Bordner, who will update membership on the MCA long range plan. This will be followed by MSU Beef Specialist Joel Cowley, who will discuss the Farm to Fab Steer Evaluation Program, and MSU Professors Dr. David Hawkins and Dr. Dennis Banks, who will discuss the MCA/MSU Bull Test Program. Both of these programs are collaborative efforts between MCA and Michigan State University.

The MCA annual meeting will also feature two special guests. Chandler Keys, vice president of the center of public policy for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) will inform the membership of NCBA's latest efforts to help producers from a legislative standpoint. Kathleen Hawkins, executive director of the Michigan Beef Industry Commission (MBIC), will then let everyone in attendance know how "Branding Beef Takes on a New

Meaning" with NCBA's brand-like initiative.

In addition to the speakers, MCA board of director elections are also on the agenda for the annual meeting. Ten producers have terms ending on the MCA board of directors: Dale Augustine of Bellevue, Pete Bontekoe of Greenville, John Cunningham of Concord, Kurt Hrabal of Breckenridge,

Scheduled to speak at the annual meeting is MCA board member Monte Bordner, who will update membership on the MCA Long Range Plan.

Kevin Kirk of St. Johns, Matt Miller of Charlotte, Dave Morris of Grand Ledge, Patricia Murphy of Olivet, Bill Nixon of Dexter, and Kevin Small of Curran. These 10, in addition to any other MCA members wishing to run, will be voted on by the general membership during the annual meeting.

The MCA annual meeting is free of charge to anyone who wishes to attend. In addition, MCA members receive reduced admission rates if they are interested in attending the Mega Conference. Registration for the entire three days includes ad-

mittance to all of the educational sessions, an extensive, multi-commodity trade show, and selected meals.

The educational sessions for Mega Conference cover a wide variety of topics including some that would be of great interest to beef producers. Some of these sessions are: Dr. Greg Quakenbush presenting "Parasite ID in Cattle"; Harlan Hughes discussing the "Economic Reality of the Beef Cow Herd"; Tim Kelsey explaining the important topic of "Getting Along with Non Farm Neighbors"; Kevin Kirk discussing "Right-to-Farm Record Keeping"; Dr. Wendy Powers who will discuss "The Potential to Reduce Manure Odors Through Dietary Manipulation"; a farmer panel discussing "Drugs or Devices for Heat Detection"; and two legislative sessions, featuring U.S. reps. Nick Smith and Debbie Stabenow, state reps. John Gernaat, Michael Green, and Howard Wetters, and state Sens. George McManus and Walter North.

For more information about the MCA annual meeting or any other MCA program, contact the MCA office at (517) 336-6780 or write P.O. Box 24041, Lansing, MI 48909. For more information on the Michigan Agricultural Mega Conference, contact Betty Driscoll, conference coordinator, at (517) 224-0930. ■

MDA seeking Michigan ag exporters for new award

The Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) is looking for the state's top exporters of food and agricultural products, MDA Director Dan Wyant announced.

"Exporting is critically important to agriculture in Michigan," Wyant said. "Michigan food and agricultural companies exported a record \$1.2 billion of products in 1996, directly supporting nearly 30,000 jobs. We estimate about one-third of the total exports were consumer-ready food products.

"The Department of Agriculture would like to identify our export leaders and recognize their achievements, which is why we have created this new annual award."

Applications for 1997 Michigan Ag Exporter of the Year are now available from the Michigan Department of Agriculture; self-nominations are encouraged. The 12-question application seeks background information on the company and its products, the percentage growth of company exports from 1994 to 1996; and the export destinations.

To be eligible, products must be greater than 50 percent grown, processed or manufactured in Michigan. Companies with headquarters in other states and production facilities in Michigan are invited to apply on the basis of their Michigan-made exports.

Nominations are due to the Michigan Department of Agriculture's International Program by Jan. 9. Selections will be made by a panel of representatives from Michigan State University, the Michigan Department of Agriculture, and the Mid-America International Agri-Trade Council (MIATCO).

One Exporter of the Year will be selected in both the large company (500 employees and over) and small company (under 500 employees) category. The top exporters will be announced and recognized at a March 10 program, during Agriculture and Natural Resources Week at Michigan State University.

For more information or to receive an application, contact the Michigan Department of Agriculture at (517) 373-9710. ■

Christmas tradition makes for booming business

Continued from page 1
to trimming the trees, beginning as early as three years of growth."

According to the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA), over 4 million Michigan Christmas trees are shipped to 38 states from coast to coast, and a few foreign countries. In 1995 alone, 17,000 trees were shipped to other countries.

In an effort to prevent the spread of pest pressure to other regions of the United States, the MDA inspects nearly 4 million trees annually, looking for signs and symptoms of gypsy moth and pine shoot beetle. According to MDA, the pine shoot beetle and gypsy moth are not a threat to consumers, their pets or their houseplants, but are monitored and controlled as required by the federal government, so the insects won't spread across the United States more quickly.

"Pine shoot beetle is not detrimental typically; we don't have much damage anywhere in the state because we are spraying and controlling it," explains Koelling. "Even if it is in the tree the consumer would not notice it; it's just an exotic pest and USDA was not sure what it was going to do if it spread to the southern timber industry."

The industry as a whole is healthy in Michigan, after it survived a period of large over-production. "We're at the end of our over-production and we have fewer trees on the market," she said. "We're hopefully going to see some healthier prices."

Although the decoration of households during the winter season dates back centuries ago, according to Koelling, the first recorded reference to Christmas trees was back in the 16th century, where evergreen trees were decorated with colored paper fruit and treats. It wasn't until 1851 that a Catskills man hauled two ox carts full of trees and opened the first retail lot in the United States in downtown New York City. ■

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Insect management for Stored Grain Principles

by Chris DiFonzo

As we continue harvest time, it is a good idea to review the principles and products related to insect management in stored grain. The price you receive for your grain is a reflection of its quality. Insects reduce quality by directly feeding on grain and reducing the test weight, in some cases up to 8 pounds per bushel. Grain shipments with more insect-damaged kernels (IDK) get a reduced grade designation. For example, if 32 or more IDK are found in a 100 gram sample of wheat, the grain can only be sold as "U.S. sample grade," i.e., for livestock feed.

Insect feeding produces fine matter, shed skins, dead insects, webbing, etc., that reduce air flow through the bin. Insect feeding also produces hot spots. Reduced air flow and hot spots, combined with moisture, lead to growth of stored grain fungi, some of which produce toxins.

Prevention is the Key

The best way to manage an insect infestation in grain is not to have an infestation in the first place. Practicing good sanitation may take some time and effort now, but it will pay off in the long run. All of the sanitation practices below are common sense, and should be part of your routine prior to storing grain at your facility or farmstead. Clean grain handling equipment (augers, combines, wagons, scoops, trucks, rail cars) and all areas of the bin, especially beneath floors. Clean around the bin as well, and remove weeds from a 6- to 10-foot border around the area. Where there is spilled grain or debris, there may be insects.

Seal all cracks and crevices, and cover fans when not in use. Treat the clean, sealed bin with a registered sanitary spray (see below). This includes floors, walls up to 6 feet, as well as the foundation and ground directly around the bin.

At Storage

Protectants are insecticides that are directly applied onto grain as it is entering the bin. These treatments are designed to control infestations throughout the grain mass. Protectants should be considered for summer-harvested grain that will be stored for three to six weeks at high (60-70°F) temperatures, or for fall-harvested grain that will be

stored until spring.

Post-Storage (Immediate)

A "top-dress" or "cap-off" treatment, i.e., a surface treatment, can be applied directly on the grain mass immediately after the bin is filled. A surface treatment must not be disturbed after it has been put in place, as this ruins the barrier. Surface treatments protect against insects entering from the top of the bin, but will not control insects already present lower down in the grain mass (for example, if you store new grain over infested old grain). A surface treatment should normally not be applied to grain that already received a protectant at bin-fill.

The success of protectant and surface treatments depends on a variety of factors:

- Age of the insecticide. A fresh spray mixture is important because insecticides can break down under warm or sunny conditions.
- Application method. Insecticides must be thoroughly mixed, then applied under the right pressure. Low pressure is better, since this creates larger droplets that coat the grain surface better.
- Location of treatment. Protectants should be applied as close to the bin as possible; the further the sprayed grain has to travel, the greater chance that insecticide will rub off the grain surface.
- Grain condition. Grain moisture and temperature are very important. Protectants may fail if the grain moisture and temperature are excessive (for corn this would mean at least 16 percent moisture and 90°F or higher temperature). Grain should not be treated until it is in the proper condition.
- Identification of the insect problem. Some treatments, for example methoprene and Bt, are useful only against particular kinds of insects.

Products labeled as protectants and/or surface treatments include:

- Common name: Chlorpyrifos-methyl
Trade name: Reldan 4E or 3% dust
Registered for: Barley, oats, sorghum, wheat
Notes: Not registered for use on corn and soybeans.
- Common name: Pirimiphos-methyl

Trade name: Actellic
Registered for: Corn, sorghum
Note: Not labeled for wheat

- Common name: Diatomaceous earth (DE)
Trade names: Several
Registered for: Barley, corn, oats, rye, soybeans, sorghum, sunflower, wheat (different products registered for different crops; check labels)
Note: DE is a chemically inert dust that abrades the insect cuticle. It may also cause equipment wear. Newer formulations of DE (for example "Protect-It" from Hedley Technologies) require a lower application rate, and may be easier to use than older formulations.

- Common name: Pyrethrins
Trade names: Several
Registered for: Barley, corn, oats, sorghum, sunflower, wheat
Note: Not registered for soybeans. Used as a surface treatment.
- Common name: Methoprene
Trade name: Diacon
Registered for: Barley, corn, oats, sorghum, wheat
Note: Not registered for soybeans. Used as a surface treatment. Methoprene is an insect growth regulator, or IGR. It affects insect development, and thus controls larvae, but not adult insects.

- Common name: Bt
Trade name: Several, such as Dipel and Top-Side
Registered for: Barley, corn, oats, rye, sorghum, soybean, sunflower, wheat
Notes: Used as a surface treatment. Bt is a bacteria that makes a toxin that kills Indian meal moth larvae. Bt will not control adult moths, weevils, and other grain beetles.

Changes for Malathion Uses

Note that malathion (57% EC, dust formulation, etc.) was once commonly used as a storage/bin spray and grain protectant. Due to a variety of problems, including insect resistance and residue concerns, the companies that market malathion will not be reregistering their products for stored grain use. Any malathion you have stored on your farm is still legal to apply in the short term. However, be

aware that grain that has been treated with malathion may not be acceptable to some processors. Before you apply malathion to a bin or commodity, check with your grain buyer to make sure your application meets their standards.

Infestation after storage: Post-Storage (Long-Term)

The key to grain management is prevention. But what if you find an infestation in your bin several months into storage? First, some questions you need to answer:

- Type of insects. Some insects are primary pests, i.e., they attack undamaged grain and develop inside kernels. This group includes several weevils (rice, maize, granary) and the lesser grain borer. Primary feeders are important because they not only cause direct damage, but also provide holes into kernels and fine material so that other insects, secondary pests, can infest the grain. Most other stored grain pests are secondary pests. Thus, the presence of weevils in your grain is of double concern.
- Location and density of insects. Where is the infestation? In the top layer of the grain mass, or throughout the bin? How many insects are there? Answering these questions requires you to sample with a grain trier or a set of probe traps.
- Environmental conditions. Can you manage the infestation using temperature by pulling cool air through the grain mass? At temperatures of 60°F or less, reproduction of grain insects drops off.

Once you have determined you have an infestation throughout your bin, one option is to move the grain into a clean, empty bin if one is available, applying a protectant during the transfer. The other option is to fumigate the bin. Unfortunately, there are no easy rules to help you decide exactly when to fumigate because there are few good thresholds.

Federal guidelines say that wheat is "infested" if two or more live stored grain pests are found in a sample. Barley, corn, oats and sorghum are "infested" if two live weevils, or one live weevil plus five secondary pests, or 10 secondary pests are found in a sample. ■

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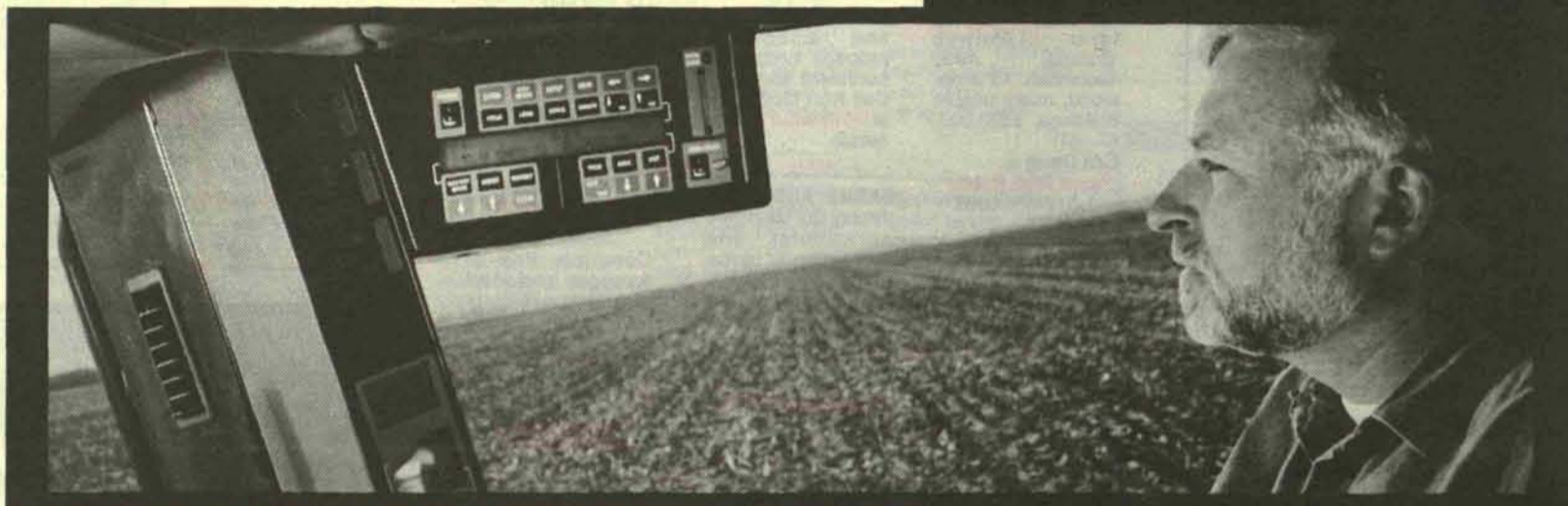
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Lansing's tri-county looks to cleaner air

By Kris Totzke

The Lansing-area Tri-County Regional Planning Commission met an early mid-November morning in the Delta Charter Township Hall to kick off promotion of all alternative fuels and vehicles that use these fuels. Alternative fuels, including ethanol and biodiesel, eliminate carbon monoxide pollution.

The commission, which just received a "Clean Cities" grant, wants Clinton, Ingham and Eaton County businesses and citizens to consider alternative fuel use and, in the near future, consider purchasing alternative, fueled vehicles.

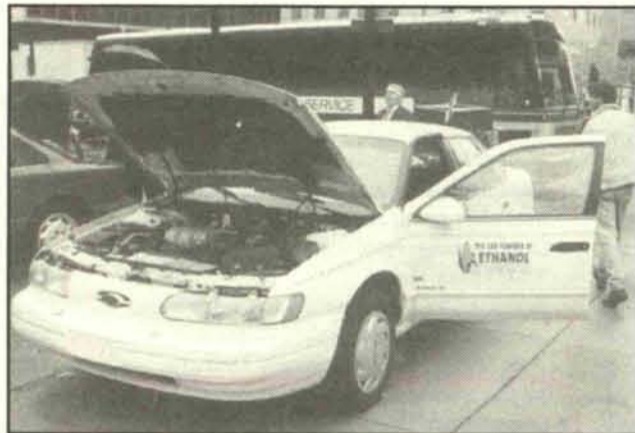
A year ago, the City of Lansing applied for the grant, which promotes the use of alternative fuels. After 10 months of obtaining necessary approvals, Lansing took their idea, and their grant, to the regional level. The Clean Cities plan is part of the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) national energy policy.

"This is a local initiative with federal support," said Murray Britton, City of Lansing. "We are looking to the future and long-range issues, including sustainability."

Britton said the \$24,000 grant would be used to gather and educate industry representatives, such as Lansing's Board of Water and Light, Thermogas Co., Ford and Chevrolet, and get the resulting coalition moving. The coalition would also use monies to apply for the DOE's "Clean

Cities" title and to assist in meeting mandates coinciding with being a "clean" city.

The Clean Cities grant has also been matched through other contributions from companies, such as the National Ethanol Coalition, Board of Water and Light, and Consumers Energy, resulting in



almost \$48,000.

Two years ago, the City of Lansing started with an alternative fuel education project. The city surveyed citizens to see how interested they would be in using alternative fuels and buying vehicles solely consuming alternative fuels.

"We had a great response to our education project. People were asking about vehicles ranging from boats to tractors," Britton said.

Philip Kokoczka, an environmental/air quality engineer with Lansing's Board of Water and Light,

said his company has looked at possible use of alternative fueled vehicles and even has specifications outlined for those vehicles.

"We are looking at cars, trucks and other vehicles used inside the plant," he said. "Some vehicles already used within our plant run on LP gas."

Britton said alternative fuels and vehicles using these fuels are a "win-win situation." They help increase air quality, provide economic benefits, provide producers expanded corn and soybean markets, and help maintain national security.

"What's good about being the strongest country in the world, if we get all our fuel from somewhere else?" he asked.

The Corn Marketing Program of Michigan said ethanol and soydiesel, biomass fuels, would strengthen national energy security because it is outside the realm of foreign policy decisions. These fuels are a stable, domestic, renewable energy supply.

Bob Boehm, manager of the field crops department at Michigan Farm Bureau, said Farm Bureau supports requirements for biomass fuel use and continued production of ethanol and soydiesel.

"We strongly support efforts to encourage biomass fuel production facilities in Michigan and expand the biofuel distribution infrastructure," he said. "We also encourage research and develop-

Continued on page 11

"Quick Facts"

- Michigan is one of the nation's top 10 corn-producing states.
- Increased ethanol production would create thousands of Michigan jobs in farming, industry and construction. Michigan would also benefit from cleaner air and a Michigan-grown renewable resource.
- Ethanol contains oxygen, which contributes to a cleaner, more efficient burn of the gasoline. When burned, it does not produce the complex pollutants and aromatics formed by gasoline additives.
- Studies have shown ethanol use reduces emissions that contribute to ozone pollution.
- Diesel engines contribute to high particulate levels and sulfur emissions, but produce practically no carbon monoxide. Studies show that soydiesel reduces emissions of particulate matter and unburned hydrocarbons.
- One bushel of corn produces about 2.5 gallons of ethanol, in addition to the high-protein livestock feeds and other by-products. Only the starch is removed for ethanol, so all the protein, vitamins, minerals, fiber and some of the energy remain. This is a very digestible human or livestock food. The price of corn will increase from 4 cents to 6 cents per bushel for every 100 million bushels of corn used.

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Michigan Department of Agriculture, Farm Bureau to host Canadian/U.S. agricultural trade conference

Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) Director Dan Wyant and Michigan Farm Bureau President Jack Laurie have announced a comprehensive meeting to address agricultural trade issues between the United States and Canada. The U.S./Canadian Agricultural Trade Conference will be held Tuesday, Feb. 3, at the Holiday Inn West Conference Center in Lansing.

"MDA and Michigan Farm Bureau have jointly called this conference to provide Michigan's agricultural industries background on the current status of trade between Michigan and Canada," Wyant said. "Canada is Michigan's most important agricultural trading partner, and we hope to learn how to be an even better trading partner with our northern neighbor."

"Canada is Michigan's most important agricultural trading partner, and we hope to learn how to be an even better trading partner with our northern neighbor."

— Dan Wyant, MDA Director

"In recent years, many Michigan agricultural sectors have felt economic pressure from imported Canadian produce," Laurie said. "Many factors are at play, including the exchange rate, differing phytosanitary requirements, trade agreements and trade policies. The February conference should provide our growers with a better understanding of fair trade practices and non-tariff trade issues governing Michigan and Canadian exports."

Speakers will include:

- Lyle Sebranek, Agriculture Minister-Counselor of the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa, Ontario, speaking on "The U.S./Canadian Agricultural Trade Relationship"
- Dr. David Schweikhardt, Professor of Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University, East Lansing, providing an "Introduction to International Trade Terms and Agreements"
- International Trade Commission representative, Washington, D.C., speaking on "How U.S. Anti-Dumping Laws Work"

Lansing looks to the future with alternative fuels

Continued from page 10

ment helping reduce production costs."

Technology has reduced the cost of ethanol production by over 50 percent in the last 10 years.

"We are now creating more energy than we are using to produce ethanol," Boehm said.

In his recent newsletter, Earl Collier, president of the Corn Marketing Program in Michigan, said he soon hopes to have a state production plant since Michigan is the fifth largest user of ethanol.

The corn marketing program recently opened two E-85 stations (85 percent ethanol, 15 percent gasoline) in Michigan this fall. One is located in Detroit, the other in Lansing. They will service state and federal fleets and be available for Ford and Chrysler E-85 vehicles being sold to the public.

"We plan on opening more stations as the need arises," Collier said. "Sunoco has taken the lead in blending all of their grades of gasoline with 10 percent ethanol. More petroleum companies are following their lead."

Britton has taken a hopeful stance that every city, township and village throughout Michigan will have a Clean Cities program in place by 2002, promoting alternative fuels. He said Lansing administration wants to keep the city "people-friendly" and hopes a Clean Cities program will help.

"If we look now to sustaining our city and surrounding area for the future, there will be a Lansing for people to live in years from now," he said. "It would be nice if you could drive from one side of the state to the other without having to plan ahead for fueling. But most of all, Michigan's air would be so much cleaner." ■

- Representative, U.S. garlic industry, speaking on "How the U.S. Garlic Industry Proved Dumping of Chinese Garlic."
- Robert Spaide, Plant Pest Quarantine Division, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., on "Documenting and Resolving Phytosanitary Barriers to Agricultural Trade"
- Representative, Canadian Food Inspection Service, Ottawa, Ontario, speaking on "How Canada and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Work to Resolve Phytosanitary Differences"
- Raj Sitaraman, Nursery Program Manager, Pesticide & Plant Pest Management Division, Michigan Department of Agriculture, on "How MDA Works to Alleviate Phytosanitary Barriers"
- Mark Arney, Secretary/Manager, Michigan Apple Committee, on "The Michigan/Brazilian Work Plan that Admitted Michigan Apples."

The workshop will be held in the American Room of the Holiday Inn Conference Center, located at 7501 W. Saginaw Hwy., Lansing. Cost for the day-long workshop is \$20 including lunch. Registration forms are available by calling the Michigan Department of Agriculture at (517) 373-9710 or the Michigan Farm Bureau at (517) 323-7000, ext. 2022. Reservations must be received by Monday, Jan. 26. ■

Testing program in "show animals" is effective in identifying inappropriate drug use

The testing of livestock at seven fairs during the 1997 fair season found only one case of inappropriate drug use in show animals, according to Dan Wyant, director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA).

A single hog tested positive for acetaminophen (a painkiller and fever-reducing agent) at the Michigan State Fair. The drug does not represent a food safety issue, but it is not approved for use in swine. No other animals have tested positive for illegal or extra-label drug use at any other fair in the state over the last three years.

The testing was conducted by "Michigan's Program for Quality Livestock Shows and Food Safety" at the Michigan State Fair, Upper Peninsula State Fair, Gratiot County Fair for Youth, St. Clair County Fair, Lenawee County Fair, Genesee County Fair and the Hillsdale County Fair. Animals tested included horses, beef, sheep and swine. The testing is conducted as a service to the fairs, and each individual fair is responsible for enforcing its rules on unfair competition and illegal and inappropriate drug use in show animals.

"Over the last three years test results demonstrate the high level of commitment that Michigan fairs and livestock exhibitors have in maintaining healthy and safe livestock for our food supply," said Wyant.

The testing demonstrates that Michigan's

program to ensure food safety in show animals is effective. The detection of a painkiller and fever reducing agent demonstrates the effectiveness of the drug screening program in identifying inappropriate drug use and potentially unfair competitive practices. The goal of the program is to improve the quality and fairness of Michigan fairs and to increase food safety through drug testing and education.

Continually educating Michigan exhibitors on inappropriate drug use and other ethical issues is essential to maintaining a high level of "fair play" at Michigan fairs, according to Wyant. In addition to drug testing, the program sponsors ethics awareness workshops in counties throughout the state. Hundreds of people have attended these workshops in the past few years.

"Michigan's Program for Quality Livestock Shows and Food Safety" was developed by a committee of individuals from the Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan State University's Animal Science Department, MSU Extension, and representatives from the livestock industry and several Michigan fairs. The program is designed to give fairs, their leaders, parents and exhibitors the tools they need to produce successful shows.

Additional educational programs are being planned for 1998. For more information about the program, contact Marilyn Thelen, Michigan Department of Agriculture, 517-373-9760. ■

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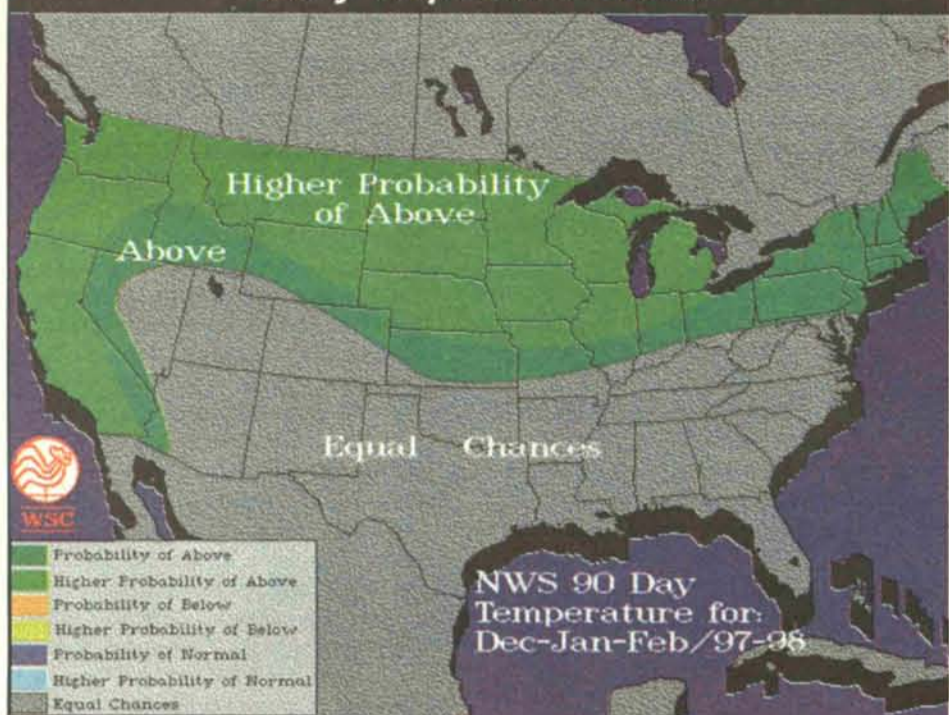
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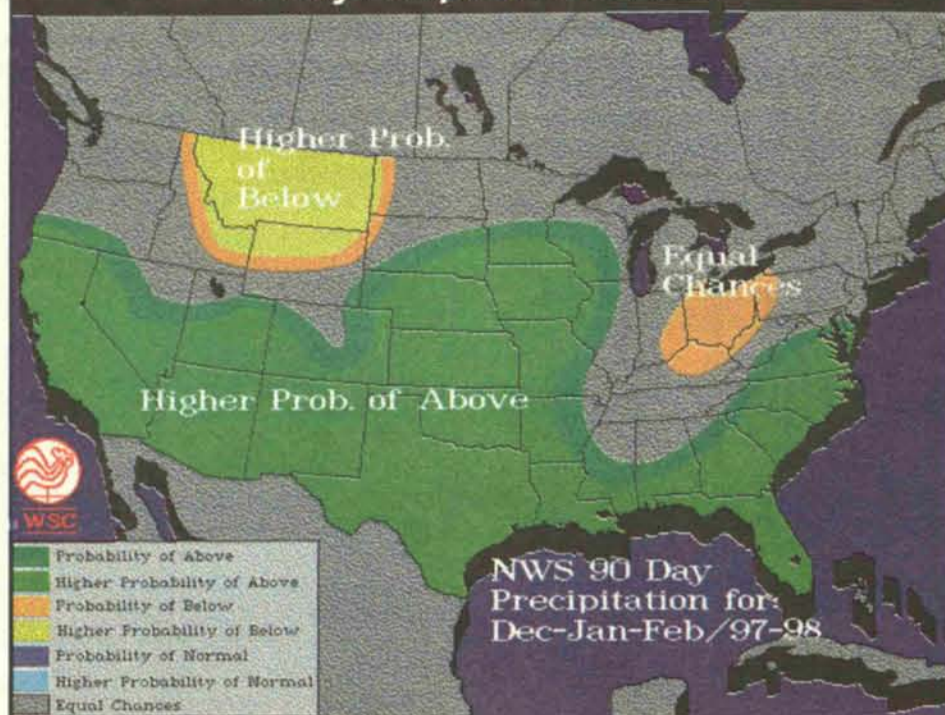
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90-day Temperature Outlook



90-day Precipitation Outlook



Weather Outlook



Michigan Weather Summary

11/1/97-11/30/97	Temperature		Precipitation	
	Obs. mean	Dev. from normal	Actual (inch)	Normal (inch)
Houghton	29.4	-1.6	2	2.54
Marquette	28.1	-2.3	2.93	2.54

Sault Ste. Marie	33	0.1	2.24	2.65
Lake City	32.2	-2.8	1.49	2.69
Pellston	34.1	-0.6	2.39	2.69
Alpena	33.6	-1.9	1.28	2.57
Houghton Lake	32.8	-2.8	1.4	2.57
Muskegon	36.5	-2.9	2.38	2.88
Vestaburg	33.2	-4.8	1.77	2.49
Bad Axe	35.2	-3.4	1.12	2.23

Saginaw	36.5	-1.8	2.06	2.23
Grand Rapids	36.1	-2.4	1.32	2.79
South Bend	37.2	-3.3	2.18	2.79
Coldwater	35.6	-3.9	1.74	2.32
Lansing	35.9	-2.7	1.36	2.32
Detroit	37.7	-2.3	0.83	2.44
Flint	36.6	-2.3	1.04	2.44

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

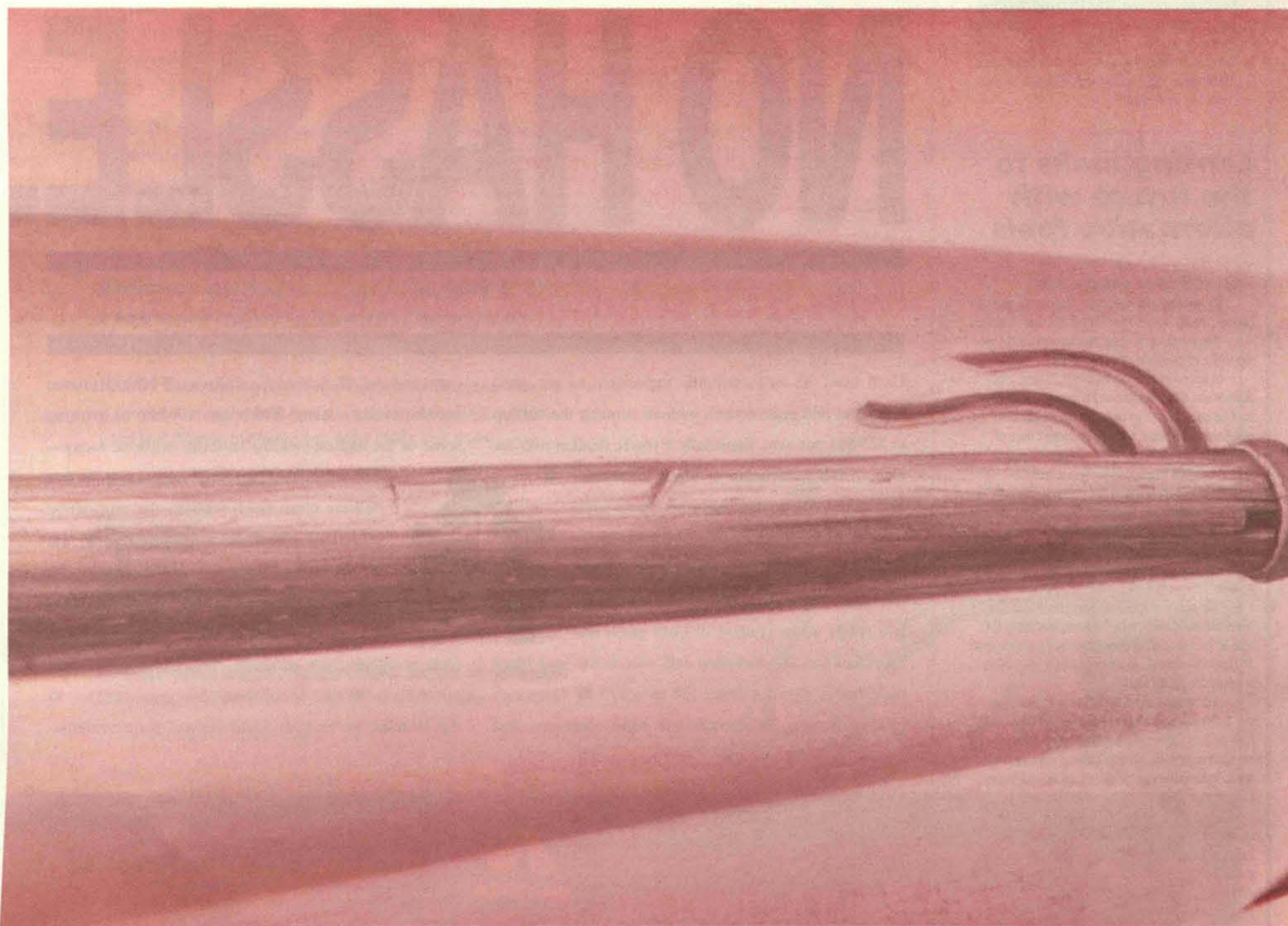


south winterlike configuration across the Upper Midwest, resulting in much-below-normal monthly mean temperatures (generally from 1-5 degrees below normal across Michigan) and normal to below-normal precipitation totals. By late in the month, the jet stream had split into two separate streams across the U.S. (a pattern more typical of winter El Nino conditions), preventing cold air masses from entering the lower 48 states and resulting in an abnormally warm Thanksgiving Day holiday across most of Michigan. New NOAA Climate Prediction Center long

lead outlooks for the coming months continue to call for milder and drier-than-normal conditions for the Great Lakes region. Because of the magnitude of the current El Nino event, forecaster confidence in the outlooks for the upcoming winter is as high as 80 percent in sections of the northern Great Plains (i.e., odds of milder-than-normal temperatures are rated as 80 percent, odds of below-normal temperatures only 20 percent), which is greater than any previously issued long-range outlook. Specifically for Michigan, the outlook for both

the month of December and for the December-February winter season is for increased odds of above normal temperatures and for near equal odds of below-, near-, and above-normal precipitation. The seasonal outlooks for January-March and for February-April are similar for temperature, but call for greater than normal odds of below-normal precipitation. Looking further ahead, the outlooks for the 1998 growing season are vague, calling for equal odds of below-, near-, and above-normal temperature and precipitation (i.e., climatology). ■

During much of November, jet stream steering currents took on a north-to-



Weed Strategies



by Karen A. Renner and James J. Kells

Herbicide labels list the interval required from the time of herbicide application until the time a rotation crop is planted. We have compiled this information from the herbicide labels in the table below. This table is Table 11- "Herbicide Crop Rotation Restrictions," printed in the 1998 Michigan State University Extension Bulletin E-434 "Weed Control Guide for Field Crops." Many herbicides have no soil residual or limited persistence in the soil. These herbicides do not have crop rotation restrictions and therefore are not listed in the table.

The footnotes in the table are as important as the number of months listed in the body of the table. Some labels require an extension of the re-crop interval when two herbicides with similar chemistry are applied. Some herbicides require a successful field bioassay (plant the crop in a test strip in the field one year and take the crop to yield; if the crop is not injured in the test strip the field can be planted to that crop the following year). Some herbicides have restrictions on the insecticides that can be used in corn the following year. Some herbicides require an extension of the crop rotation interval if low rainfall occurs in the months following application. Read the table and read the footnotes to understand the time interval required between herbicide application and planting of a rotation crop.

Herbicide crop rotation restrictions An important consideration when choosing herbicides

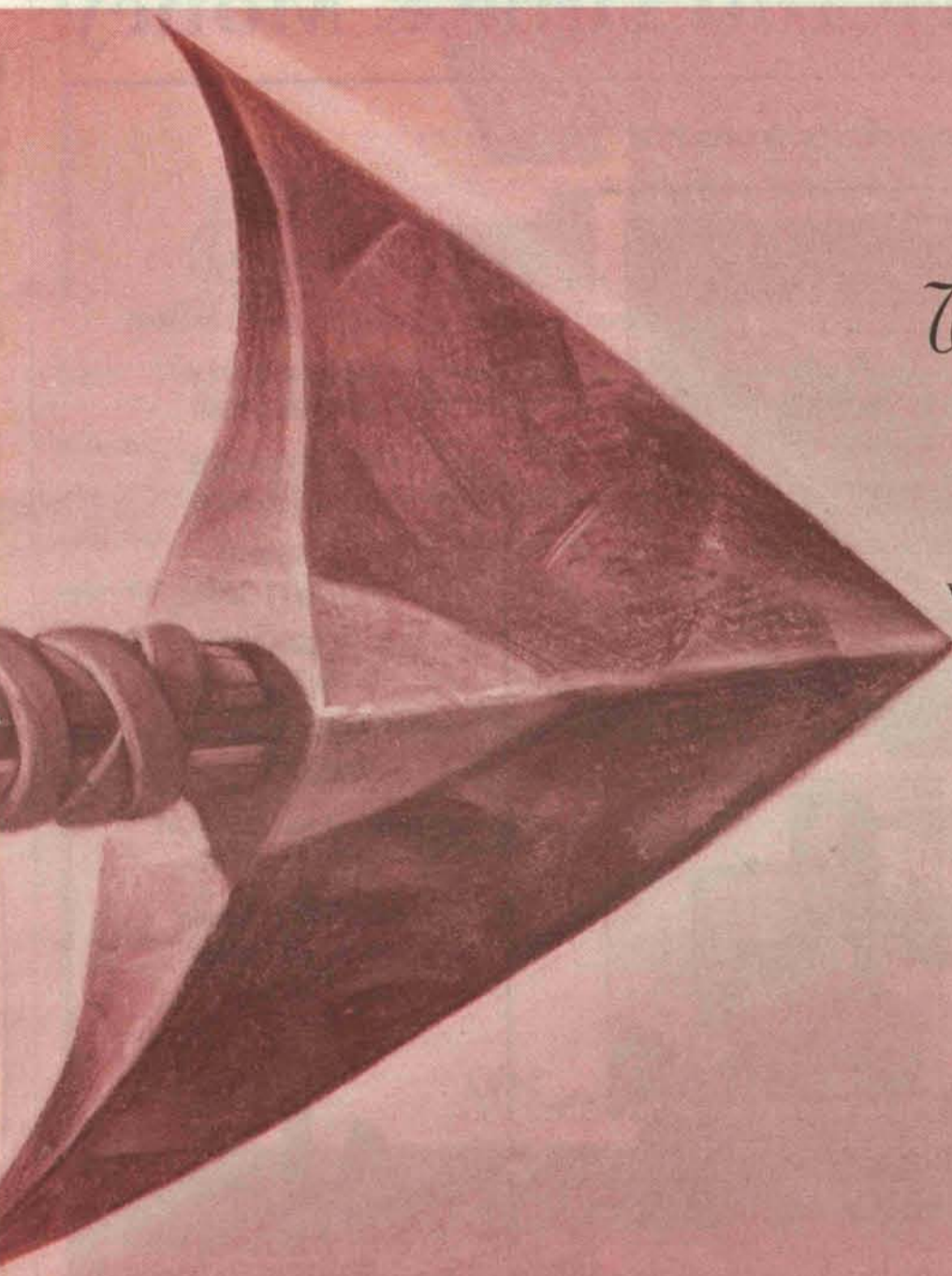
	SOIL pH RESTRICTION	(in months)													
		SOYBEANS	FIELD CORN	SEED CORN	WHEAT	ONIONS	BARLEY	RYE	ALFALFA	DRY BEANS	SUGAR BEETS	POTATOES	CANOLA	CUCUMBERS	TOMATOES
Accent	None	1	0	0	4	8	4	10	10	10/18 ^h	10/18 ^h	10/18 ^h	10/18 ^h	10/18 ^h	10/18 ^h
Atrazine ¹ 1 lb a.i./A	None	10	0	0	3	21	21	3	15	21	21	10	21	21	21
Atrazine ¹ 2 lb a.i./A	None	18	0	0	3	21	21	15	21	21	33	18	33	33	33
Authority Broadleaf	>6.8 ^m	0	10	10 ⁿ	4	30	12	12	12	12	30	30	30	18	12
Authority Synchrony STS	None	0	10	10 ⁿ	4	30	12	12	12	12 ^o	12	30	30	18	30
Basis	None	0.5	0	-	4	8	8	-	10	8	10	4	18	18	18
Basis Gold ^{ab}	None	10	0	10	10 ^{aa}	-	10 ^{aa}	10 ^{aa}	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Beacon	None	8	0.5 ^d	-	3	8	8	3	8	8	18 ^v	8 ^{ac}	18 ^v	18 ^v	18 ^v
Broadstrike+Dual	>7.8 ^p	0	0	0	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4	4	26 ^q	12	26 ^q	26 ^q	26 ^q
Broadstrike+Treflan	>7.8 ^p	0	8	8	4	12	4	4	4	4	26 ^q	12	26 ^q	26 ^q	26 ^q
Canopy ¹	>6.8 ^m	0	10 ^d	10 ⁿ	4	30	4	4	10 ^h	12	30	30	18	18	10 ⁱ
Canopy XL	>6.8 ^m	0	10	10 ⁿ	4	30	12	12	12	12	30	30	30	18	12
Classic ^{1,2}	>7.0 ^{aa}	0	9	9 ^h	3	3	3	3	9	9	30	30	30	18	15 ⁱ
Command ¹ 2pt	≤5.9	0	9 ^{ah}	9 ^h	12	16	16	16	16	9	9	9	16	9	9,12 ^g
Curtail	None	10.5 ^{af}	1	-	1	1	1	-	10.5	10.5 ^{af}	12 ^{af}	18	10.5	18	18
FirstRate	None	0	9	-	3	30	30	30	9	30	30 ^{aa}	30 ^{aa}	30 ^{aa}	30 ^{aa}	30 ^{aa}
Harness/Supress	None	10	0	0	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hornet	>7.8 ^p	10 ⁱ	0	-	4	4	4	4	10 ^h	10 ^h	26 ^q	18	26 ^q	26 ^q	26 ^q
Lightning	None	9.5	8.5	8.5	4	18	9	4	9.5	9.5	40 ^{aa}	26	40 ^{aa}	40 ^{aa}	40 ^{aa}
Matrix	None	10	0	10	4	9	9	4	12	10	18	0	12	12	1
Permit	None	10	0	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prinsep 1 lb a.i./A	None	10	0	0	3	21	21	3	15	21	21	10	21	21	18
Pursuit ¹	None	0	8 ^h	8 ^h	3	18 ^h	9 ^h	4	4	11	40	18	18	18	18
Python	>7.8 ^p	0	0	0	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4	4	26 ^q	12	26 ^q	26 ^q	26 ^q
Raptor	None ^{af}	0	9	9	3	9	4	4	9	9	18 ^{af}	9	18	9	9
Reflex/Reestar	None	0	10	10	4	4	4	4	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Sceptor ^{1,2} 1/2 pt (26oz) southern 2 tiers of counties all other counties	None	0	9 ^h	9 ^h	4	11	11	18	18	11	26	18	18	18	18
Scorpion III	None	10 ⁱ	0	-	4	4	4	4	10 ^h	10 ^h	26 ^q	18	26 ^q	26 ^q	26 ^q
Stinger	None	10.5 ^f	0	-	0	0	0	0	10.5	10.5 ^f	0	18	10.5	18	18
Synchrony ^{1,2}	None	0	9	9 ^h	3	3	3	3	12	9	30	30	18	18	9
South of I-96	None	0	9	9 ^h	3	3	3	3	12	9	30	30	18	18	9
North of I-96	>7.0 ^{aa}	0	9	9 ^h	3	3	3	3	12	9	30	30	18	18	9

Herbicide Crop Rotation Restrictions Chart

**Field bioassay after 40 months.
-No information on the label.
^a 12 months on clover.
^b Extension of recrop intervals of Sceptor application following Sceptor, Canopy.
^c Extension of recrop intervals following Sceptor, Canopy, Canopy XL, or Authority Broadleaf.
^d Carryover may increase if extreme dryness occurs in the four months following herbicide application.
^e and TriScept, Squadron, Detail.
^f and Pursuit Plus, Steel, Passport.
^g Choice of rotational crop hybrid is important. See herbicide

labels and information provided by the manufacturer.
^h Do not use an organophosphate at-plant insecticide on field corn following the previous year use of Command if soil pH is less than 5.9. Also - do not use an organophosphate at-plant insecticide on field corn following the previous year use of Command AND then apply Accent or Beacon postemergence in corn.
ⁱ Not recommended in fields where these crops are planned as rotation crops.
^j Sugar beets: pH<7.5/pH>7.5 (if 25 in. rain falls between application and planting sugar beets.) Potatoes, Canada, Cucumber: pH<6.5/pH>6.5.
^k Time interval extended to 18 months if organic matter < 2%

AND less than 15 in. of rainfall in the 12 months following treatment.
^m Soil pH may be quite variable in a field. If the composite soil pH is near 6.8, areas in the field may be higher than 6.8 and herbicide carryover may occur. Know the pH variability in the field before Canopy, Canopy XL, Authority Broadleaf or Classic. This may require sampling several smaller areas within a field. If only spots in the field exceed 6.8 a grower may apply these herbicides and then rotate the following year to either soybeans or an imidazolinone resistant corn hybrid.
ⁿ Seed corn inns and oat varieties vary in their sensitivity. Damage or yield loss may occur.
^o These are recommended time intervals which do not appear on atrazine labels. Carryover risk is affected by soil pH, tillage, rainfall, and temperature. Where risk of carryover exists, fields should be sampled and a bioassay conducted. Refer to an atrazine label for additional restrictions regarding rotational crops. Carryover risk with Prinsep is similar to or slightly greater than atrazine.
^p DO NOT apply to areas where the soil pH is less than 5.9 AND organic matter is greater than 5 percent. Also DO NOT apply where soil pH is greater than 7.8 as this may result in decreased crop tolerance.
^q Requires a 26 month rotation interval and a successful field bioassay.
^r Imidazolinone resistant (IR or IMR) and imidazolinone tolerant (IT) corn hybrids can be planted the year following Sceptor application.
^s 9 month seed - 12 month transplant.
^t Transplant only.
^u No soil pH restrictions south of I-96. Use only if soil pH is less than 7.0 on fields north of I-96.
^v The full rate (0.76 oz/A) is not recommended in fields where these crops are planned as rotation crops. A rotation interval of two growing seasons is recommended for rates 50% or less of the full rate.
^w No pH restriction if Classic is applied at 1/4 or 1/3 oz/A. At 1/2 oz/A or higher, pH must be below 7.0.
^x IR or IMR corn - 8 month.
^y If application is made after June 30, if an extended dry period occurs after application, or if the soil pH is greater than 7.8, rotate only to corn or small grains the next year.
^z Do not plant these crops the year after Permit application.
^{aa} Fall-seeded cereals only.
^{ab} If applied after July 1, do not plant crop other than corn or sorghum the following year.
^{ac} Rotation restriction is 18 months for rates higher than .38 oz/A.
^{ad} Requires 30 month rotation interval and a successful field bioassay.
^{ae} Extend interval for sugarbeet rotation to 26 months if soil pH is below 6.2.
^{af} Clover recrop interval is 18 months.
^{ag} Rotation interval is extended to 18 months if soils contain less than 2 percent organic matter and natural precipitation is less than 15 inches during the 10.5 months following treatment.
^{ah} Do not plant sugar beets in the same growing season following an application of Curtail.

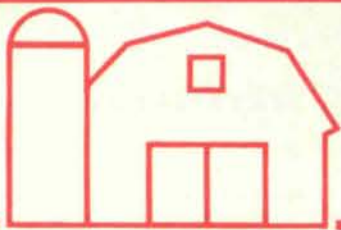


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AG CENSUS USA

Take the time now to complete Ag Census

Soon after you read this issue, the latest Ag Census forms will be mailed to all farms across the country with over \$10,000 in gross sales, including 80,000 forms to be mailed in Michigan.

This census however will mark the first time in 83 years that the USDA will be conducting the comprehensive collection of all agricultural production, inventories, sales and expenditures for every county in the nation.

"We're closer to the agriculture community," explained David Kleweno, Michigan's State Statistician. "For example, when the ag census was done previously we received information that is being done answered questions to support it from that end, but we really weren't involved with marketing and attempt to promote it."

"The census is the only opportunity where the trend in the county production information can be measured," he added. "It really gets back to a critical issue that agriculture is such a vital part of our whole nation and in particular even here in Michigan with the special commodities that we have. If we don't collect and provide solid factual, concrete data to work from then, agriculture cannot be properly represented."

What is the information used for?

According to Kleweno, the census information is used by almost everyone — for Extension educators, Farm Bureau to railroad line planners — who is involved or associated with the nation's agriculture.

"It is not unusual for our office to receive inquiries from businesses that are planning an ex-

pansion or some other business improvement predicated on the volume of farm production that is available in a given region."

What to look for

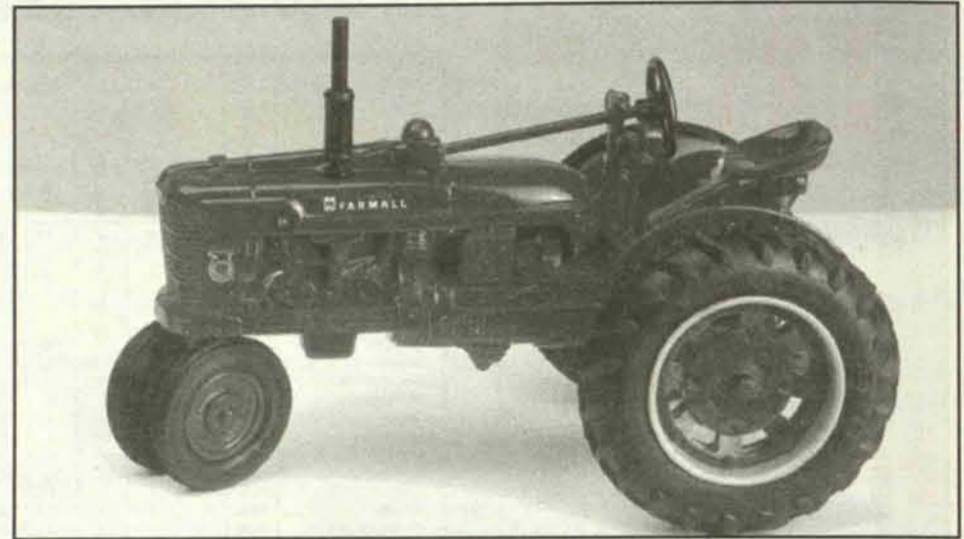
With a deadline for return of Feb. 2, the blue, green or gold forms will be mailed in mid-December and should take an average of 30 to 90 minutes to complete. "There's a short form and a long form," Kleweno explained. "The short form will be mailed to approximately 75 percent the total mailed in Michigan and the long form will go to the remaining 25 percent. The long form has a slight difference in it — it has one more section in it, looking at production expenses and income issues and that type of thing and that go to the larger farmers and operators. Typically those are in the neighborhood of \$250,000 in potential gross value of sales, will receive the long form."

By law, the information collected from individual farmers is held in strict confidence by the NASS and farmers must participate in the census.

"It would be nice if we could hand the respondent a \$100 bill for the time it takes to complete the form and say, 'here's your immediate payoff,' but often the payoff is much greater than that in long-term benefits to agriculture," Kleweno added.

If you have questions or need assistance completing the 1997 Census of Agriculture report form, call 1-888-4AG-STAT. ■

Fifth edition of Michigan FFA collector tractor now available



The Farmall "H" is the fifth in the series of commemorative tractors for sale through Quality Stores to benefit the Michigan FFA Foundation.

Toy tractor collectors take note! Quality Stores, Inc., in partnership with Ertl, is continuing the Michigan FFA Collector Tractor series with the Farmall "H." As the fifth edition of the Michigan FFA Collector Tractor series, it will feature an outline of the state of Michigan with a number "5" in the center to signify it as the fifth in the series.

Michigan Farm Bureau's Julie Chamberlain, executive director of the Michigan FFA Foundation, says the collector tractor has proven popular in generating donations to fund youth leadership and awards programs for high school students participating in FFA.

"We are extremely grateful to Quality Stores and Ertl for continuing this fund-raising tradition," Chamberlain said. "Quality Stores has also strengthened their partnership with FFA through a \$50,000 pledge to the Vision2000 endowment fund. This fund will provide financial security for FFA and food and fiber experiences for K-12 youth."

Quality Stores, based in Muskegon, made a five-year commitment to manufacture and market a

limited edition of Michigan FFA tractors. So far, this program has raised \$62,000 for the Michigan FFA Foundation. "The funds raised are designated to help support and develop young leaders for the future," said Al Fansler, president and chief operating officer of Quality Stores.

The Farmall "H," considered the smaller brother to the infamous Farmall "M," replaced the Farmall F-20 in 1939. Designed as a tractor capable of pulling a two-bottom plow, the Model H's four-cylinder engine produced 24 PTO horsepower. Sold with a five-speed transmission, adjustable rear wheels and drawbar, the Farmall "H" weighed 5,500 pounds. Over 375,000 Farmall "H" tractors were produced before being replaced by the Super "H" in 1953.

In addition to the new Farmall "H," collectors will want to complete their FFA series with the fourth FFA tractor, the Oliver 1555. Both tractors are available at all Michigan Quality Farm & Fleet and County Post Stores and sell for \$39.99 each. ■



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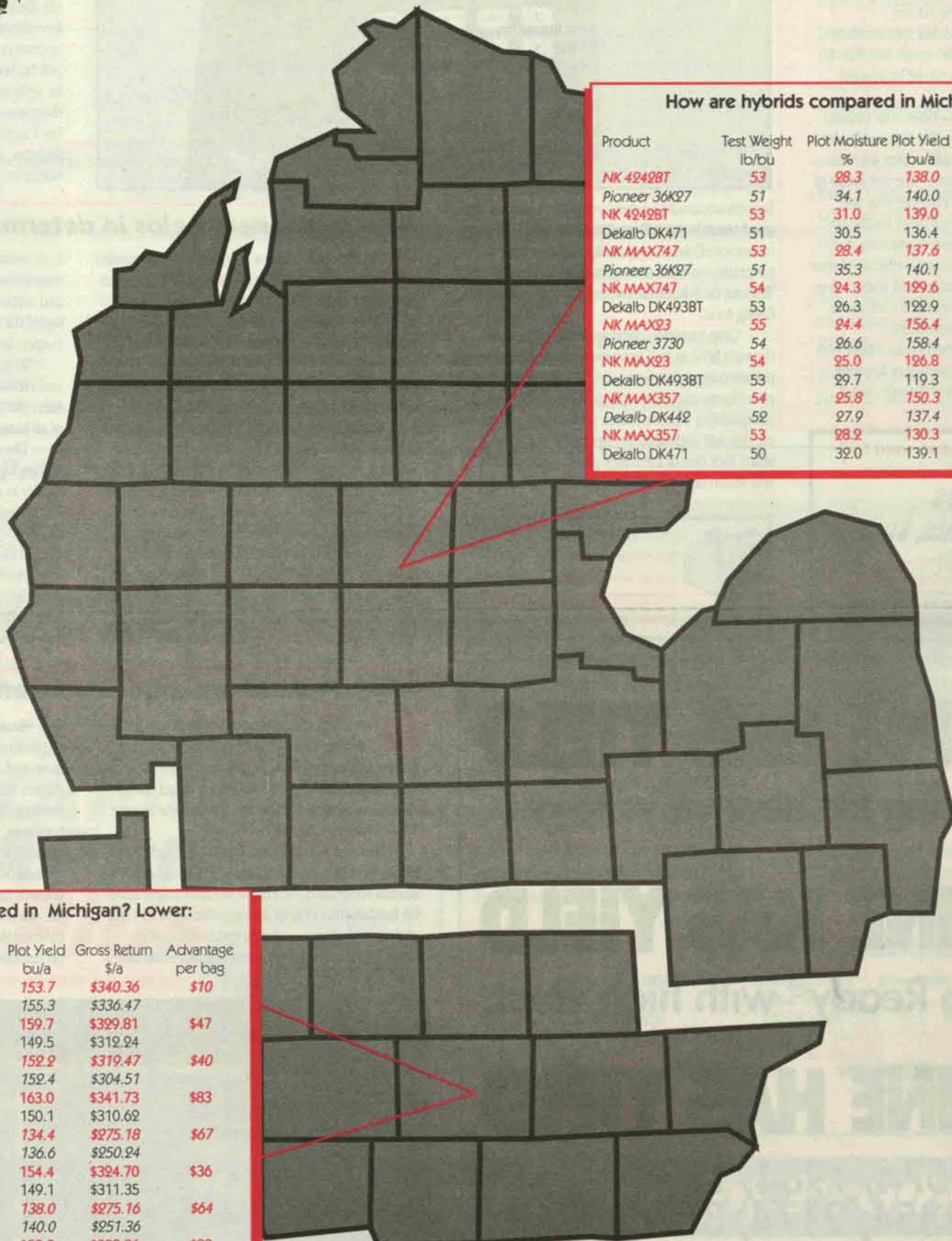


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How are hybrids compared in Michigan? Upper:

Product	Test Weight lb/bu	Plot Moisture %	Plot Yield bu/a	Gross Return \$/a	Advantage per bag
NK 4242BT	53	28.3	138.0	\$275.16	\$64
Pioneer 36K27	51	34.1	140.0	\$251.36	
NK 4242BT	53	31.0	139.0	\$265.43	\$22
Dekalb DK471	51	30.5	136.4	\$257.13	
NK MAX747	53	28.4	137.6	\$275	\$76
Pioneer 36K27	51	35.3	140.1	\$246	
NK MAX747	54	24.3	129.6	\$276	\$61
Dekalb DK493BT	53	26.3	122.9	\$254	
NK MAX23	55	24.4	156.4	\$333	\$19
Pioneer 3730	54	26.6	158.4	\$326	
NK MAX23	54	25.0	126.8	\$267	\$97
Dekalb DK493BT	53	29.7	119.3	\$231	
NK MAX357	54	25.8	150.3	\$314	\$111
Dekalb DK442	52	27.9	137.4	\$272	
NK MAX357	53	28.2	130.3	\$261	\$25
Dekalb DK471	50	32.0	139.1	\$251	

How are hybrids compared in Michigan? Lower:

Product	Test Weight lb/bu	Plot Moisture %	Plot Yield bu/a	Gross Return \$/a	Advantage per bag
NK MAX21	57	21.9	153.7	\$340.36	\$10
Pioneer 3489	56	23.5	155.3	\$336.47	
NK MAX21	208	26.7	159.7	\$329.81	\$47
Dekalb DK566	194	25.7	149.5	\$312.24	
NK N52-82	55	25.6	152.2	\$319.47	\$40
Pioneer 3394	55	29.0	152.4	\$304.51	
NK N52-82	55	25.7	163.0	\$341.73	\$83
Dekalb DK566	53	26.4	150.1	\$310.62	
NK N4640BT	53	26.9	134.4	\$275.18	\$67
Pioneer 36K27	52	32.8	136.6	\$250.24	
NK 4640BT	55	25.2	154.4	\$324.70	\$36
Dekalb DK493	53	25.6	149.1	\$311.35	
NK N4242BT	53	28.3	138.0	\$275.16	\$64
Pioneer 36K27	51	34.1	140.0	\$251.36	
NK N4242BT	54	24.7	152.3	\$322.26	\$29
Dekalb DK493	53	26.0	150.0	\$311.59	



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Precision Agriculture

by Neil R. Miller

In the past two years, high-tech equipment and inputs have moved from the pages of ag journals and science fiction novels to the fields of Michigan farmers. GPS soil sampling, yield monitors, variable rate inputs, remote sensing, genetically engineered crops, and other formerly unheard of technologies are now available throughout the state.

"Precision agriculture," however, is as old as farming itself. This message was brought home to me last month when I attended a presentation of "More Information, More Control," a farmer training course that will be taught by MSU Extension personnel this winter. The course, commissioned by Deere & Co. but sponsored by various agri-businesses, reinforces the fact that the foundations of precision agriculture lie in good management.

Thorough Planning — Does your farming operation have specified long- and intermediate-term goals? Are they quantifiable so that you can measure your progress over time? Are you aware of management needs and opportunities that you need to pursue, or do you simply wait for the opportunities to find you? Pre-season planning is equally critical in maximizing the "precision" of your operation. This includes planning field trials to fine-tune your crop management systems (not just to meet the needs of your local sales rep).

Record Keeping — When I map a field with poor-producing areas, I have no way of knowing whether the cause was chemical damage, weed

The foundations of precision agriculture

outbreaks, compaction, poor drainage, fertility or some other cause unless the producer has a good system of monitoring fields throughout the growing season. This becomes increasingly important as

your data now.

Financial management — By combining yield monitor data with input and marketing records, I can produce profitability maps to help

farmers judge the performance of management practices and/or inputs. Without good accounting, these judgments are much more difficult. Say, for example, you are comparing two tillage practices. Are you able to say with confidence what your equipment costs you to operate?

A good accounting system should be able to break down profitability to each enterprise (farm, crop or livestock) that you manage. As with crop record-keeping systems, compatibility with GPS data is still limited, but improving fast. The biggest limitation to their use is farmers' reluctance to take the time to set up and maintain a system.

Will it pay? The economics of high-tech agriculture remain poorly understood. I remain convinced, however, that the farmers who will benefit the most are the ones who already have a foundation of good conventional management. No operation will score high on every one of the above points. My fear, however, is that some farmers will be seduced into thinking that technology will usher them into a new era of "precision." If you still find it hard to plan ahead, keep good records, and track finances, you may be wiser to address these issues before buying a yield monitor or GPS services. ■



farmers accumulate several years of yield data. With good records you will be able to compare the performance of varieties, planting dates, fertility programs, or other management issues over time. Without such information, you'll be left with a confusing mess.

Crop record-keeping systems are available through MSU as well as an ever-growing number of private companies. Some can be linked directly to georeferenced fertility and yield data. Although compatibility between these programs is still limited, this will undoubtedly improve in the coming years. Pick one of the major players (contact me if you would like suggestions) and begin logging



If you have any topic suggestions for the Precision Agriculture column, please write to Michigan Farm News, P.O. Box 30960, Lansing, MI 48909, or send e-mail to: mfbinfo@aol.com

New instrument helps in determining wheat quality

An automated system to identify wheat classes, characteristics and defects—including kernels damaged by diseases such as karnal bunt or scab—could help grain inspectors verify whether wheat is suitable for export. The first commercial prototype of the system was demonstrated at the annual meeting of the American Association of Cereal Chemists, held in San Diego, Calif., in October.

Karnal bunt is a wheat fungus recently found in areas of the southwest United States. If samples of wheat contain "bunted kernels"—those infected with karnal bunt—countries without the disease may not import the infected wheat. So it's critical that uninfected wheat can be certified free of karnal bunt.

Currently, bulk wheat samples are visually examined for bunted kernels. But grain inspectors would need to check only a few wheat kernels with a new instrument designed by Agricultural Research Service (ARS) scientists and engineers with Perten

Instruments North America, Springfield, Ill. The instrument detects either common or karnal bunt and sorts suspect kernels. A positive result would signal the inspector to verify visually whether the suspect kernel is infected with karnal bunt.

In preliminary tests at ARS' Grain Marketing and Production Research Center in Manhattan, Kan., the instrument correctly identified 93 percent of all bunted kernels.

The instrument combines near-infrared technology with an automated system to detect wheat quality in single wheat kernels. It uses an ARS-patented single kernel characterization system and a diode-array spectrometer made by Perten Instruments. Each wheat kernel has a unique physical composition, as shown by light being absorbed differently at various wavelengths. An integrated fiber optic system allows rapid analysis of two kernels per second. ■

AFBF: Federal tax code needs reform

Despite significant improvements made by the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, the federal tax code still "destroys jobs, penalizes saving and investment, and punishes personal efforts to get ahead through hard work," Farm Bureau told the Senate Small Business Committee recently.

Missouri Farm Bureau President Charles Kruse, testifying on behalf of the American Farm Bureau Federation, said there remains ample room for fundamental change and improvement in a federal tax code that is complex and burdensome. Kruse said the code also severely limits economic opportunities.

Kruse said Farm Bureau supports reforms to the federal tax code to encourage savings, investment and entrepreneurship. He said fundamental reform should simplify tax laws, reform Internal Revenue Service rules and regulations and simplify tax forms. Capital gains taxes and estate taxes should be eliminated and a two-thirds vote of Congress should be required to increase or impose new taxes or to increase tax rates. In addition, Farm Bureau is opposed to a federal value-added tax and believes that any flat-rate tax plan should be based on net income. ■

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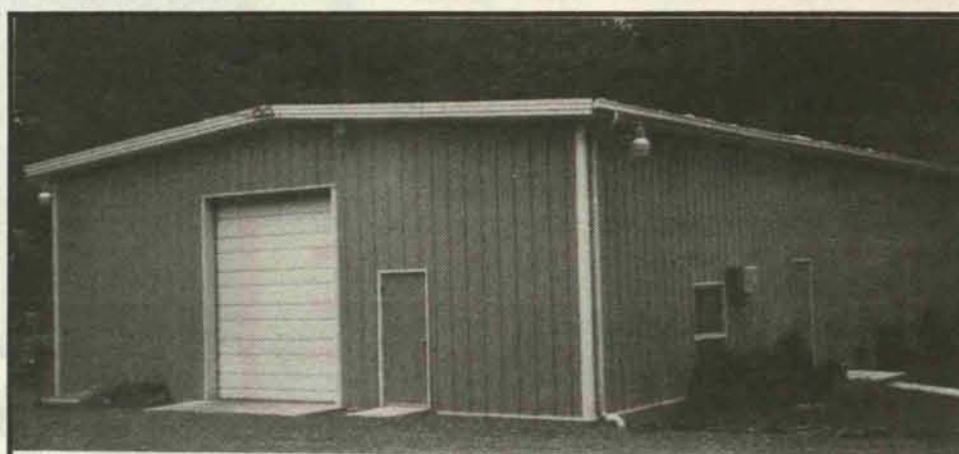
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"Forage 2001, Moving into the 21st century" available at MSU

Michigan State University Extension's Dairy, Field Crops and Livestock Area of Expertise Teams are sponsoring Forage 2001, Moving into the 21st Century.

Forage 2001, an alfalfa producer's workshop, will cover such topics as cost, economics and importance of growing alfalfa in Michigan; the best methods to determine when to harvest first-cut alfalfa for optimum quality; and cutting schedules for alfalfa harvest. The workshop will also review insect problems affecting the 1997 alfalfa crop; the best strategies for managing potato leafhopper damage with insecticide options, integrated pest management techniques and economics of control; and varieties of potato leafhopper-resistant alfalfa.

Recertification credits will also be available. Featured speakers include Dr. Rich Leep, MSU's department of crop and soil sciences; Dr. Chris DiFonzo, MSU's department of entomology; and local Area of Expertise team agents with dairy,

field crops and livestock.

Forage 2001 will be held at six locations across the Lower Peninsula:

- Jan. 13, Jackson County MSU Extension
- Jan. 14, Jerry's Restaurant, Grandville
- Jan. 15, Uby Heights Country Club, Uby
- Feb. 4, Ithaca RESD, one-half mile west of the US 27 Ithaca exit, next to the bowling alley
- Feb. 5, Delta County's MSU Extension, 2840 College Rd., Escanaba, located in the Delta County Service Center
- Feb. 6, B.J.'s Restaurant, Gaylord

The workshop will start at 9:30 a.m. with registration and end at 3:30 p.m. Cost is \$25 for the first family member and \$15 for each additional member. Price includes lunch and a sweep net. For more information, contact the Jackson County Extension office at (517) 788-4292 or your local Extension office. ■

New pasteurization technique being tested

Agriculture Department researchers are testing new methods of pasteurization that would help make liquid foods taste better by reducing the temperatures needed for proper sterilization.

"The heat causes some degradation in the flavor, the aroma of your product," said USDA chemical engineer Mike Kozempel, who is testing new alternatives to pasteurization at a USDA facility near Philadelphia. "As you heat these things, you can also destroy some of the nutrients in there. This is especially true of vitamin C, which is extremely sensitive to heat."

The research, which has both proven effective and has failed miserably, involves subjecting liquids to electrical energy fields—similar to microwaves or radio signals.

Each year hundreds of billions of pounds of liquid foods are pasteurized in the United States, including 150 billion pounds of milk, vegetable juices, most fruit juices, tomato sauce, canned and bottled beer, and liquid eggs. The process involves heating the liquid to 162 to 167°F — for milk — for 15 seconds. Pasteurization destroys pathogens that can make people sick, but it leaves some safe bacteria. ■

MSU Extension will hold dairy animal meeting at 12 sites

The importance of maintaining a healthy and comfortable dairy herd will be underscored in a series of health management training sessions across the state starting in mid-January.

Topics for each session include the importance of dairy herd biosecurity, treatment and prevention of lameness, control of contagious mastitis and infectious diseases, neonatal calf management, and the effect that housing and ventilation have on optimum animal health.

The topic of animal lameness was a featured educational session at this past year's Ag Expo. The workshop will provide further detail about how to prevent and care for lameness in the dairy herd. The program is being sponsored by the Michigan State University Extension Dairy Programming Team and the Dairy Programs Group.

Early registration, at least 10 days prior to each session, is requested for meal planning and educational material preparation. The cost will be \$40 per person plus \$20 for each additional person from the same farm. On-site registration will be \$50 and \$20 for each additional person from the same farm. The noon meal will not be guaranteed for on-site registrants.

Brochures and registration forms are available at the county MSU Extension office. Details about the program can be obtained from David Beede at MSU by calling (517) 432-5400. ■

The program will be conducted:

- **Jan. 13** at the Highland Golf Club, 3011 US-2 and US-41, near Escanaba
- **Jan. 14** at the Holiday Inn on US-131, near Petoskey
- **Jan. 15** at the Hillman Community Center in Hillman
- **Jan. 22** at the Comfort Inn, 2424 S. Mission Road, Mt. Pleasant
- **Jan. 23** at the Uby Heights Country Club, 2409 E. Atwater Rd., near Uby
- **Jan. 30** at the Service Center Building at the Chelsea Fairgrounds, Chelsea
- **Feb. 6** at the Quality Inn and Convention Center, 1000 Orleans Blvd., Coldwater
- **Feb. 10** at Bill Oliver's Best Western, M-55 and M-115, near Cadillac
- **Feb. 11** at the Quality Inn and Forward's Conference Center, near West Branch
- **Feb. 17** at the Most Holy Trinity Church, 11159 Kent St., Fowler
- **Feb. 18** in the Kellogg Biological Station Education Auditorium, near Hickory Corners
- **Feb. 19** at Jerry's Country Inn, 3360 Fairlanes Rd., near Grandville

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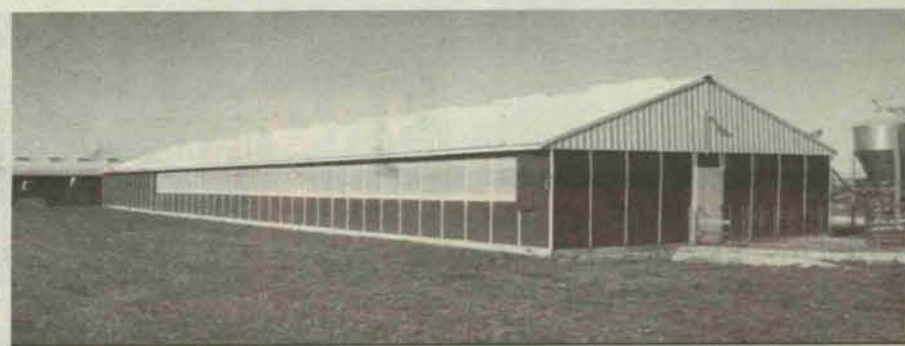
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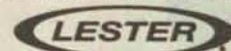
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Looking for Russian and Latvian host families

New MFB intern program needs six families

By Kris Totzke

Three Russian students and three Latvian students are looking for temporary homes for summer 1998, and former Barry County Farm Bureau President Bob Bender is looking for six Michigan farm families to show them a glimpse of America's agricultural life through a new Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) internship program.

"It is a dream for most Russians to visit America one day; few get the opportunity. With this program, they are able to experience America and its agriculture," said Bender. "Last year we had three interns from Russia. Now we have the chance to bring three more and three from Latvia." Latvia is a former communist country that used to be a part of the former Soviet Union before it broke up.

The program began last year and is co-sponsored by Michigan State University (MSU) and Michigan Farm Bureau.

Julie McDaniels, administrative officer for MSU's Institute of International Agriculture, said Michigan families are needed to provide a home away from home for only two to three months. Last year's student visited from July 4 until Labor Day.

"Ideally, we would like them here when

planting season begins, but that is next to impossible," she said.

Bender said Russian and Latvian universities don't end until the third week of June and



start up again after Labor Day. The students would arrive in America as soon as school got out and head home before the next semester started.

"These students are coming to see how American agriculture works: the new technology, seed varieties, the distribution channels, how MSU Extension works with farms. They

need to be given a better understanding of how information and research filters down to American farmers," McDaniels said. "They need families willing to immerse them in American

culture by letting them be a part of their lives."

Each student has to be 20 to 35 years old, have basic English language skills and come from a farm background. Bender said families would also host students studying agricultural courses that would put them back on the farm. He hopes what they learn here will be useful in their home countries.

"Last year's students had a wonderful experience and I know this year's will as well. They couldn't stop talking about their host families," Bender said. "The students are energetic, ambitious workers looking to soak up the all the knowledge they can while here in Michigan."

Families who are hosting students typically provide work on their farms for wages in order to pay for the trip. This arrangement provides the means for the Russian and Latvian students to be able to afford the time in America. On average, families provided last summer's students approximately \$150 a week, along with their room and board. They also enrolled in a one-credit MSU lifelong education course to provide the students with health insurance while in the country.

According to MFB Information Director Mike Kovacic and coordinator of the 1998 internship program, costs averaged around \$1,800 for the host families.

Bender hosted the three Russian men for a week before they headed on to their host families. He remembers their amazement at the dishwasher, washing machine and clothes dryer.

"What Americans take for granted every day is hardly evident in Russia. Those men had never seen a dishwasher in their life," he said. "They were completely amazed at the 'box' under the counter that cleaned dishes within an hour. And our washing machine was nothing like they had at home."

During their week's visit with Bender, he tried to show them many things. The interns visited Walmart, an airshow in Battle Creek and a 4th of July celebration. He took them out in his boat on Lake Michigan and flew them over the state in his airplane. Bender said they came to live the American life, so he tried to show them what it was like to be an American.

Three Michigan Farm Bureau state board members and their families housed the men for the summer after their week with Bender and his family.

Vasily Shipilov, a 23-year-old master's degree student at Voronezh Agricultural University, lived with Jim and Patty Miller on their fruit and vegetable farm near Coloma, where they also operate a farm market.

Patty said it was a wonderful experience and Vasily became a part of their family in a very short period of time.

"I've learned a lot about Russia, and insight you cannot have unless you've had this experience to have someone live with you," Jim said. "You get your conception of another country from documentaries and CNN, and that probably isn't very accurate." ■

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Hay supply remains tight for second year

Hay harvest across much of Michigan was below normal for the second year in a row. This lower yield, coupled with a very low inventory carryover from the 1996 harvest season, continues to make for tight hay supply.

An October survey was conducted by the Osceola County MSU Extension office of more than thirty Michigan State University county Extension agricultural agents and Michigan Hay and Grazing Council board members. It found hay supplies to be lower than normal in all areas of Michigan except the Muskegon and Ottawa County area where it is reported to be about average. A cool summer with some dry periods and with a heavy infestation of the potato leafhopper caused the yields of the two largest cuttings, the first and second, to be lower than usual. Favorable September growing conditions did allow for some late third cutting growth, making this harvest slightly larger than normal.

Total forage supply was also increased slightly in the Northern Lower Peninsula with an early killing frost that caused more corn to be made into corn silage. Still, this additional forage is doing little to soften hay prices.

For lower-quality hays (under 16 percent crude protein) all but three of the 12 reporting regions reported higher prices than last year. Reporting the same prices for these hays was Southwest Michigan. Reporting slightly lower

prices than last year were Southeast Michigan and the Western Upper Peninsula.

For higher quality hays, again all but three of 12 regions were reporting higher prices than last year. These three regions were the Lansing area, and Mt. Pleasant to Cadillac area reporting

better year than 1996, some had thought the hay price would fall. Prices have fallen from last winter. This survey, however, compares prices in October of each year. The question remains: Will these prices climb this winter as they did last winter?



Once again this year, weather conditions forced hay yields to be below average across the state.

about the same prices, and the Southeast Michigan region reporting slightly lower prices.

Hay yields were slightly better in 1997 than 1996, but still below average. With a somewhat

Hay supplies appear to be the shortest in the Northern Lower Peninsula from Cadillac northward and the eastern Upper Peninsula. Prices are the highest there as well as in South-

west Michigan for lower-quality hays averaging \$80-115 per ton. Higher-quality hays are in the highest demand in Southeast Michigan, Southwestern Michigan, the Arenac County area and the Northern Lower Peninsula bringing an average of \$110-\$180 per ton. Prices per ton reported in October for lower-quality hay for all regions were: Southwest \$75-115; Southeast \$60-100; the Thumb \$70-90; Lansing area \$65-105; Muskegon area \$60-100; Mt. Pleasant to Cadillac area \$60-90; Arenac County area \$70-100; Grand Traverse area \$70-110; tip of the Lower Peninsula \$70-110; Eastern U.P. \$85-115; and Western U.P. \$40-70.

Prices reported per ton for higher-quality hays (greater than 16 percent crude protein) by regions in October were: Southwest \$115-175; Southeast \$110-170; the Thumb \$120-160; Lansing area \$105-145; Muskegon Area \$110-165; Mt. Pleasant to Cadillac area \$105-145; Arenac County area \$120-175; Grand Traverse area \$110-160; tip of the Lower Peninsula \$130-180; Eastern U.P. \$100-140; Western U.P. \$80-120 (very little higher-quality hays are available in the U.P. as most hay is harvested as first cutting).

Price ranges are quite common in hay pricing. These ranges take into account: hay feed quality; presence or absence of weeds, dust or mold in the hay; quantity sold; and bale form. For example, a pickup load of hay (1 ton) may sell for \$15-30 more per ton than a 15-ton semi-trailer load of the same hay. Also, typically round bales sell for \$10-20 less per ton than the same hay sells for in square bale form. This is because there are fewer buyers that can handle large round bales, thus there is less demand.

Anyone wishing to buy or sell hay should check with their local, county MSU Extension office. Hay for sale can be listed free of charge on the computerized Michigan Hay Seller's List. Anyone wishing a copy of the list can receive one from their county Extension office or can find a copy on the website at <http://ceenet.msu.edu/hay>.

Roundup Ready corn safe

The Agriculture Department has completed its environmental assessment of Roundup Ready corn and issued a finding of "no significant impact on the environment" from cultivation and agricultural use of the product, according to a news release from Monsanto.

The finding by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service comes after the United States Environmental Protection Agency approved the use of Roundup Ultra herbicide on corn improved with the Roundup Ready trait.

Monsanto Co., which is developing Roundup Ready corn technology jointly with Dekalb Genetics Corp., has initiated a consultation with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which is expected to be completed prior to the 1998 growing season.

Future of farming

Many classes are offered at the 1998 Michigan Agricultural MEGA Conference

Specialization is the future of farming. It is also the focus of "Specialty Grains," one of many classes offered during the Jan. 19-21, 1998 Michigan Agricultural MEGA Conference, at the Lansing Center, downtown Lansing.



"Specialty Grains" offers an in-depth look at producing and marketing specialized crops, such as high-oil, high-starch and high-protein grains. Specialty producers grow added-value crops at significant premiums.

Panelists include: Frank Peterson, director of Integro Services, a specialty grains marketing firm; DuPont's Quality Grains Nutritionist Paul Erikson; Mike Braun, marketing specialist for Novartis; and Dave Cheney, specialty crop farmer.

For more information about the 1998 program, "The Next Farming Generation," contact the MEGA Conference at 1100 West Taft Rd., St. Johns, MI 48879-9104, phone (517) 224-0930, fax 517/227-2067, e-mail bdriscoll@voyager.net.

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Discussion Topic

January 1998
A monthly resource for the Community Action Groups of Michigan Farm Bureau



Some seemed to think it would be a miracle-cure for school funding. But now that the laws included in Proposal A have been in effect for a few years, people have varied opinions about how well it's working — or not working.

"Most districts are in better shape today," said Jon Miller, a dairy farmer and president of the Ovid-Elsie Area Schools board of education. "There are," he notes, "a number of districts in the state of Michigan that are in very tough financial shape."

Miller's district is one that is faring well financially, but he attributes that to a tight-fisted administration and school board.

Ovid-Elsie recently dedicated their new, state-of-the-art middle school. "It took a long time for us to get that," he said. "It went through a lot of votes before we got the millage passed." But whether the difficulty had anything to do with Proposal A being on people's minds is hard to tell.

"There are a lot of people that don't understand Proposal A," Miller said, noting that school funding can be complex.

Proposal A is the school finance reform approved by Michigan voters in 1994. It moved funding for schools from property taxes to sales taxes.

Among other provisions, Proposal A contained wording that limits annual property tax assessment increases to 5 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is lower. When that property changes hands, the new owner pays taxes on the current value.

Besides the fact that it slashed people's property taxes, another reason Proposal A passed was that citizens had called out for measures that would

Three years later: How Proposal A is really affecting school funding

close the gap between funding for "rich" school districts and poorer districts. Voters were willing to support the increase in sales tax from 4 percent to 6 percent to see this and other school finance reform happen.

According to Gov. John Engler's office, there are three effects that have come from Proposal A. First, more money is being spent on public education than ever before. Second, the governor says there are more fairly or equitably distributed funds. Finally, he says local school districts are better off financially than ever before.

No one argues that the state money available for schools has increased. In fact, the 1997-98 school aid budget is \$11.5 billion. Compare that to 1989-90, when the same budget was \$7.9 billion.

However, Proposal A does have its critics. Some say it was just a tax shift, and that local school boards are still suffering serious financial problems.

Business owners (other than farmers) sometimes criticize Proposal A because they don't see the property tax benefits that homeowners and farmers do. They're taxed at a higher rate to fund schools.

Now that voters approved so much more money to go to schools, some districts are finding it's tough to pass millages. The problem lies in that the sales tax money only goes toward school operating expenses, not capital improvements. A school needing a new building is finding it difficult to get voters to buy in. They believe their taxes were just cut, only to have the government try to raise them again.

On the other hand, schools are no longer allowed to proposed millages for operating expenses — only capital improvements. If operating expenses, such as teacher salaries and maintenance, can't be paid for with state money, then the school is out of luck.

All in all, people are finding that Proposal A is not the end-all cure for school funding — but it wasn't intended to be. It does shift how school

operating expenses are paid for and it does increase how much money is available. Local bond issues still need to pass for schools to make capital improvements. School boards and administrations still need to manage their money wisely.

It comes down to an issue of fairness. What's the most equitable way for the state of Michigan to tax its residents to pay for schools? Then, how should that money be distributed among schools? One possible answer to these questions was put before voters and Proposal A won out. ■

Discussion Questions

1. Are schools in your area suffering financial problems? Has that changed from years prior to Proposal A?
2. Should future school funding increases be sought through property taxes, sales taxes, income taxes, or a combination? Why?
3. Should wealthier communities be expected to pay for poorer schools? How should state funding be fairly distributed among districts?

New soybean germplasm line resists insects

A new soybean germplasm line will give breeders more options for developing insect-resistant, high-protein soybean varieties for farmers.

Known as Plant Introduction (PI) 417061, the line naturally resists several leaf-eating insects, including velvetbean caterpillar and soybean looper. A research geneticist with USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) identified the line among the agency's soybean germplasm collection located at the University of Illinois, Urbana.

Insects cause more than \$40 million in losses annually to U.S. soybean producers. The velvetbean caterpillar and soybean looper are the country's most serious soybean defoliators, with the heaviest infestations in the Southeast.

PI 417061 is not the first soybean germplasm line with insect resistance, but it will add to the diversity of the soybean gene pool, an advantage to soybean breeders. Other lines in the soybean collection that demonstrate resistance to leaf-feeding insects are PI 171451, PI 227687 and PI 229358. These lines have been used to develop at least three insect-resistant varieties: Crockett, Lamar and Lyon.

Soybean breeders and researchers may obtain germplasm by contacting Randall Nelson, soy germplasm curator, ARS Plant Physiology and Genetics Research Unit, located at the University of Illinois, Urbana. ■

1997 Small grain production up

Michigan's 1997 small grain crops had a good production year due to favorable weather and growing conditions, according to the Federal/State Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service. Wheat yields were at a record high due to beneficial spring and summer weather. Moderate summer conditions also resulted in better yields for barley and oats compared to last year. Some highlights of the report are as follows:

- Wheat yield, 62 bushels per acre, topped the previous record set in 1985 and 1995. This yield was well above last year's disappointing yield. Planting went well and emergence was ahead of normal. The crop came through the winter in good shape, and growing conditions were excellent due to a cool spring and mild summer temperatures. Harvest

weather was excellent.

- Oat production, 5.5 million bushels, was 53 percent higher than the record low of 3.6 million bushels for 1996. Oat crops were planted prior to the normal period and benefited from cool May temperatures. Moderate summer weather kept the crop in good condition. Harvest began in late July and progressed ahead of schedule.

- Barley production, 1.4 million bushels, increased 20 percent from last year, despite a 4 percent decrease in harvested acres. Excellent planting conditions allowed farmers to get the barley crop in on schedule. The cool spring and mild summer temperatures provided excellent growing conditions. ■

Cargill offers college scholarships

By Kris Totzke

The Cargill Scholarship Program for Rural America is offering scholarships to high school seniors from rural communities across the country. The committee has set aside \$250,000 and, through the National FFA Organization, will award 250 scholarships in the amount of \$1,000 each. This brings the total to \$2.5 million since 1986.

"As the cost of post-secondary education rises, obtaining an advanced education is becoming harder to realize," said Ernest Micek, Cargill's chairman, president and chief executive officer. "This program will recognize students' academic achievements and potential while responding to the financial pressures felt by many farm families."

Cargill recognizes and encourages academic achievement, accomplishments and talents of America's rural youth. Recipients are selected on the basis of academic record, demonstrated leadership, extracurricular accomplishments, financial need and other criteria.

Students may apply for a Cargill scholarship if they are from farm families and plan to attend an accredited post-secondary institution in the fall of 1998. Selected recipients must demonstrate financial need and farm families must receive at least 50 percent of their income directly from farming to be eligible. Students do not have to be FFA members to apply.



FFA will evaluate all applications received, select and notify recipients in May. For more information, contact the National FFA Foundation, Cargill Scholarship Coordinator, Box 45205, Madison, WI 53744-5205, or the nearest Cargill facility. Applications are due Feb. 16. ■

Single business tax exemption signed into law

Legislation clarifying the exemption for farmer-owned cooperatives from the Single Business Tax, often referred to as SBT has been signed by Gov. John Engler. According to Michigan Farm Bureau Legislative Counsel Ron Nelson, cooperatives had traditionally been exempt from the SBT, until the state's treasury office changed their interpretation of the state's tax code.

"Traditionally, the interpretation of the tax code was that the portion of business a cooperative was doing with its farmer-members was exempt from the SBT liability," Nelson explained. "Then treasury audited several farmer co-ops, and recently had indicated to those co-ops, by way of a bill, that they in fact owed SBT tax."

"And if you owe on a portion of your business, then you do, in fact, owe on all of your business, retroactive, with a penalty," Nelson continued. "So this measure was very important to several farmer co-ops in the state, plus potentially important to all farmer co-ops in the state, because this language

now clarifies that the farmer portion of the business is tax-exempt."

Business conducted with individuals who are not members of the cooperative will still be subject to the SBT liability. The measure also clarifies that when a contractor buys nursery stock for planting in a yard that the contractor is not the consumer but is simply the middleman and, therefore, is not liable for the SBT.

Nelson justifies the SBT exemption for cooperatives by pointing out that individual members of the cooperative already pay a tax. "The co-op is nothing more than several individuals doing business, really, for themselves so those individuals, to the extent that they're involved in a co-op, already have a tax liability as individuals," he said. "So when there is profit from the co-op, they share in that profit, which is taxable. This measure simply avoids the co-op members from paying the tax twice. So it's not a matter of escaping the tax, it's a matter of tax equity." ■

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FDA irradiation approval a win for consumers and producers

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval of irradiation for beef, lamb and pork this past week is good news for livestock producers and consumers. And, despite opposition from some consumer activist groups expressing concerns over radiation, Michigan Farm Bureau's Ken Nye, director of the Commodity and Environmental Division, says the technology has been used safely for years on poultry, fruits, vegetables and grains.

"This technology should be viewed as just one more tool to use in making sure our food supply is as safe as possible," Nye said. "It's really no different than the other processes that we use, such as pasteurization of milk, canning of fruits and vegetables and other products, so that we can make sure that those products are shelf stable and are as healthy for consumers as possible."

The process has been shown to be safe and to significantly reduce bacterial contamination. The FDA gave its stamp of approval to irradiation after three years of study. Irradiation does not make meat radioactive and it does not change the meat's taste, texture or appearance.

It is now up to the Agriculture Department to change its regulations over the next few months to allow for irradiation, says Nye. "Hopefully, we'll have a final rule in effect as soon as possible, so that we can utilize this new and improved technology. Estimates indicate that irradiated meat



Food irradiation is much more effective than steam pasteurization or sterilizing rinses. The FDA is taking a complete look at its safety and effectiveness. So far, there have not been any health risks found to the consumers.

products could cost consumers about 5 cents more per pound. That would add about \$2 per person to the average grocery bill."

Food irradiation is a safe, simple and relatively inexpensive process, which has been available since the 1950s. It is much more effective than steam pasteurization or sterilizing rinses, which only kill food-borne bacteria on the surface. Irradiation penetrates the meat, which kills any internal bacteria that might be present. Irradiation can be used after meat is packaged for shipment.

Nye says that in reality, the United States is behind the rest of the world in utilizing irradiation. More than 35 countries use the procedure, which was approved earlier this year by the World Health Organization.

"FDA has undertaken a complete and comprehensive process to determine the safety and effectiveness of irradiation for red meat," Nye said. "More than 40 years of research show irradiation is a safe, effective technology that kills germs causing food-borne illness. This ruling means that FDA has found absolutely no health risk for consumers."

Irradiation should not be looked at as a "magic bullet" but it is another valuable tool in our food safety arsenal. The process has been endorsed by the World Health Organization and the American Medical Association. Farm Bureau expects for use of irradiation on red meats final clearance to be given by mid-1998 according to Nye. ■

Michigan FFA members earn American FFA Degree

At the recent 70th National FFA Convention in Kansas City, Mo., local Michigan FFA members earned their American FFA Degree among the more than 44,000 FFA members, guests and supporters who attended the annual event.



Highlighting this year's list of presenters were Ron Archer, motivational speaker; Dr. Lowell Catlett, agricultural futurist; Edward James Olmos,

actor; Heather Whitestone-McCallum, former Miss America; Orion Samuelson, agricultural broadcaster for Channel Earth Communications; and Ted Waitt, Chairman and CEO of Gateway 2000.

Over 1,700 FFA members received the organization's highest award, the American FFA Degree, including 29 from Michigan:

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