Weather worries plague Michigan’s harvest season

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

CFTC issues ruling on Toledo delivery points

CFTC delivery ruling mixed news for Michigan producers

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

CFTC rejected the CBOT’s request to eliminate the Toledo location entirely, by a 5-2 vote, ruling instead that CBOT must keep the Toledo location for soybeans. CFTC did approve, however, to eliminate Toledo as an approved delivery point for corn, agreeing to allow that the U.S. corn market is shifting to the western Corn Belt.

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

If all goes as planned, that is an opportunity to ask the questions that we are going to ask, like “What’s the difference between corn and soybeans?” Boehm explains. “The CFTC ruling is definitely positive for soybeans. However, at first glance, it would appear to create greater basis risk for corn contracts, meaning that cash settlement prices will be negatively affected.”

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

1. For the soybean contract, require that the CBOT remain Toledo, Ohio, and St. Louis, Mo., as delivery points, in addition to Chicago and the northern Illinois River, as the CBOT proposed.
2. For both the soybean and corn contracts, require locational price differentials.
3. For both the corn and soybean futures contracts, require that the contingency plan, which applies if the river traffic on the northern Illinois River is obstructed, be changed and supplemented.
4. For both the corn and soybean futures contracts, eliminate the CFTC-proposed $40 million net worth requirement for eligibility to become a shipping certificate issuer.

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

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

A former Michigan congressman, Rep. John Dingell (D-Dearborn), has weighed in on the issue, calling the port of Toledo vital to Michigan corn and soybean growers. “I have serious concerns about the potential for disaster in the corn futures market under the CBOT’s plan,” he said.

Cover Story

Poor weather creates immature corn silage handling dilemma

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

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

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

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

Continued on page 4

Inside this issue of the Michigan Farm News

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Capitol Corner

CFTC issues ruling mixed news for Michigan producers

Milk superpool faces collapse

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

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

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

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

It’s been roughly 55 cents to 50 cents a hundredweight for nearly every Grade A producer for over a year. A producer for every hundredweight of milk they sell over the last five years. Larry Hamm, MSU’s agricultural economics department chair, explained.

That premium has been set for fluid milk, each milk supplier contributes part of the premium to the pool, based upon its Class I order. The order price, Hamm explains.

"If every body’s in it, there’s no problem. If any number of people withdraw, the first decision they have to make is will they continue to charge the $1 over-order premium to their customers — the people they sell milk to.

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

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

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

Continued on page 4

Forecast for the future

Methods for controlling starlings

CFTC issues ruling mixed news for Michigan producers

Milk superpool faces collapse
From the President

Huntress access and the superpool — taking responsibility for our future

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

Each of us has an opportunity to directly influence the outcome of the crucial decisions that will impact the success of our industry. We are either going to continue to provide our children the opportunity to pass the family farm on to the next generation or we are going to help bring our agricultural industry into the 21st century.

The first issue involves our state’s wildlife-deer herds. Delegation parties met last year’s state map annually meeting took a stance that basically said, “Enough is enough!” They said our industry could not continue to suffer the economic damage that we were experiencing.

Thanks to a new sense of cooperation between the Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Farm Bureau, and the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, we now have what I consider to be positive changes in management of our wildlife-deer herd. Special antlerless-deer seasons, controlled harvests, state issued antlerless permits, less permits, give, for the first time ever, a chance to significantly reduce the size of the deer herd and conserve the amount of forage available to our deer years.

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

MSU professor is FSA’s chief of strategic planning

“An administrator, Dr. Kelly has announced that Rick A. Kelly has been appointed to the position of chief of strategic planning. He was extremely well qualified for this role, and we are fortunate to have him on our team.”

Jack Laurie, President Michigan Farm Bureau

Scher vows to get tough on ag trade issues

During his confirmation hearing to become special trade ambassador for agriculture, Peter Schumacher, assistant secretary, said that the United States would not allow another nation to use “dubious science” to block U.S. agricultural exports. Schumacher would become the first agricultural trade ambassador in the U.S. trade representative’s office. His hearing appears to be going rather smoothly, according to reports. Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.) introduced Scher to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and told the panel that Scher’s style is “professional, hardworking, and that he knows the job. We must do this. We must make sure that we are competitive in the global market.”

“T”

Brazil to review biotech position

U.S. soybean farmers this year, Brazil’s biotechnology commission will hold a meeting to review its position on whether to allow entry of genetically modified soybeans. Brazil currently does not allow entry of genetically modified soybeans except for scientific purposes.

The American Soybean Association (ASA) has called for the Brazilian government’s support of biotechnology. “We expect that they will reconsider their decision at the October meeting once they realize the benefits that biotechnology offers the farmers of Brazil, such as Roundup Ready, soybeans have been approved by some regulatory agency in the United States.”

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

The proposed United Nations Climate Change Treaty in its current form, would substantially increase production costs for U.S. farmers and ranchers, said Sens. Robert Dole and Kay Hagan in a recent interview with the Hearst Newspapers. The Senate, however, has passed a revised treaty that would allow the superpool to play an active role in helping to maintain the superpool. I would encourage each of you to be well informed on this issue and support your leadership in doing so.

Climate Change Treaty clouds outlook for farmers

The proposed United Nations Climate Change Treaty, in its current form, would substantially increase production costs for U.S. farmers and ranchers, according to a recent survey. The Senate, however, has passed a revised treaty that would allow the superpool to play an active role in helping to maintain the superpool. I would encourage each of you to be well informed on this issue and support your leadership in doing so.

USDA issues positive trade forecast for 1998

Poll: Americans want enviro-protection at all costs

A poll conducted by the National Party reveals that 60 percent of U.S. adults believe that environmental protection is “the most important requirement and standards cannot be too high, and continuing environmental improvements must be made.”

The 60-degree figure is up eight percent since a similar question was posed to citizens in 1992. The poll was released in conjunction with Earth Day.

EU to appeal WTO ruling on hormone-treated beef

The European Union announced on Thursday that it has lodged the World Trade Organization ruling that outlawed the group’s ban on hormone-treated beef. The appeal was filed on 30 September 1997.

The EU says that the WTO’s ruling “strikes at Europe’s right to set safety standards for its citizens.” The EU has the right to set our own level of protection, she said. The ban is accused of being discriminatory against the United States and Brazil, which produce hormone-treated beef.

“Little Ice Age” could be slowing global warming

Researchers at the University of New Hampshire say that evidence points to the possibility that a “Little Ice Age” may be slowing the reported global warming effects produced by man-made gases.

The Little Ice Age is a 500-year global cold event that started around the year 1400. The study suggests that the chill hasn’t ended.

“This could be modifying the temperatures...”
The Legislature takes up Michigan Drain Code

Legislature takes up Michigan Drain Code

Sen. Joel Gougeon, (R-Bay City) has sponsored each amendment and Rep. Howard Wetters, (D-Kawkawlin), H.B. 4337 issues in the proposals and whether or not Farm Bureau supports them:
1) Requirements for new and improved drains be inspected every three years and maintained as necessary

MB position: Farm Bureau supports
Mainteance of drains will result in long-term savings for the district.

2) Increasing the minimum maintenance assessments from the current ceiling of $2,500 per mile to $5,000 per mile.

MB position: Farm Bureau supports
Increasing this amount means it will not require an expensive petitioning and evaluation process. Maintenance improvement project will increase $5,000 per mile.

3) Access to property shall not be diminished by the drain district. Drain commissioners need the ability to enter property to drain with reasonable notice to the landowner.

MB position: Farm Bureau supports
Farm Bureau will work to ensure this can be improved to allow this type of entry to be mandated by the regulatory authority. Reasonable notice to the landowner.

4) Drain commissioner can enter property outside of the drain district to remove the costs of rebuilding the drain from reasonable notice to the landowner.

MB position: Farm Bureau supports
Farm Bureau will work to ensure this type of entry to be mandated by the regulatory authority.

5) Authority for the drain commissioner to abandon necessary and uninterrupted drainage systems results in lower sophistication drainage systems required larger more sophisticated drainage systems. Drain commissioners need the ability to control development pressure on estimate of cost if permitted they want and are willing to pay for it.

6) Drain district board of directors provide the ability for drain commissioners to hold official informational meetings to discuss specific issues.

MB position: Farm Bureau supports
This will provide the opportunity for the people living in the district to be able to explain the current bill and any resistance to the current initiatives.

7) Access to property shall not be diminished by the drain district. Drain commissioners need the ability to enter property to drain with reasonable notice to the landowner.

MB position: Farm Bureau supports
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8) Drain district board of directors provide the ability for drain commissioners to hold official informational meetings to discuss specific issues.

MB position: Farm Bureau supports
This will provide the opportunity for the people living in the district to be able to explain the current bill and any resistance to the current initiatives.

Environment and Natural Resources

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

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

9) Drain district board of directors provide the ability for drain commissioners to hold official informational meetings to discuss specific issues.

MB position: Farm Bureau supports
This will provide the opportunity for the people living in the district to be able to explain the current bill and any resistance to the current initiatives.

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MB position: Farm Bureau supports
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Food safety is major concern of food shoppers

When it comes to buying food, avoiding foodborne disease is important to both men and women. That's one finding of USDA's food consumption survey, called "What We Eat in America." According to the survey, 88 percent of the women questioned during the first two years of the survey rated food safety as "very important"—slightly higher than the 86 percent who gave taste a similar rating. Food safety captured a "very important" vote from 79 percent of the men questioned; taste was important to 78 percent. 

"So, a food's nutritional quality was less important, however. More than half of men and 40 percent of women rated only use new information on a serving size means something else. Building health and food health problems are related. Nearly 4,000 men and women answered these and other questions answered these questions and other questions answered these questions answered these questions.

Be wary of potential for gas can explosion

Filling a metal gasoline can while the can is sitting in the plastic bed liner of a pickup truck could cause a fire, according to a Michigan State University Extension safety leader. Howard J. Doss, Michigan State University Extension safety leader, says a fire potential is created by a buildup of static electricity. How does it work? "The gasoline can is placed on the ground, away from the vehicle, any static electricity that results from the gasoline flowing into the can from the nozzle is neutralized, but has been absorbed by the ground," Doss says. "Accordingly, the insulating effect of the plastic bed liner surface prevents the static charge generated by the gasoline flowing into the can from grounding." As the static charge builds, it can create a spark when the gasoline can and fuel nozzle meet. When the spark occurs in the flammable range in the gasoline vapor space near the open mouth of the gasoline can, a firecrest, Doss explains. To minimize the potential for a fire, Doss recommends the following:

- Use only an approved gasoline container.
- Never fill any gasoline container inside any vehicle, in a vehicle trunk, in a pickup bed or on any surface other than the ground.
- Remove the approved container from the vehicle and place it on the ground before filling.
- Refill the container from the vehicle, other customers and traffic.
- Keep the nozzle in contact with the gasoline container during filling.
- Never use the gasoline pump nozzle latch-open device to fill a portable gasoline container.

An improved forage grass for cows

Bedford trefoil could be a big hit with farmers and livestock alike. Unlike alfalfa, this forage plant has low protein levels. Unfortunately, when taking heavy grazing, it's nutritious and cattle apparently find it tasty. The bad news, Berndtson says is highly susceptible to root diseases.

New studies with USDA's Agricultural Research Service have developed the first commercial variety of bedford trefoil that resists root diseases. The new variety, called Steallad, in 1995. The secret behind Steallad's sturdiness is a wild hardfield trefoil found by USDA scientists in Morocco in the late 1980s. Steallad has borrowed an interesting trait from the Moroccan trefoil: the ability to produce rhizomes, enables the plant to spread. Rhizomes are underground stems that grow below the soil and can root to make new plants. Even if parts of the original mother plant succumb to disease, new plants that develop from rhizomes allow the plant to live and spread. This new tool for survival should help the yellow-flowered bedford win in the U.S. farming community, which has been wary of Bedford trefoil in the past because of its disease susceptibility. Another plus for the new variety, it won't cause bloat, allowing the formation of excess gas in the grazing animal's stomach.

USDA changes poultry plan, includes amendments

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

One of the changes establishes a "U.S. Salmonella Monitored" program for primary meat-eating chickens breeding flocks. This goal is to decrease the occurrence of salmonella in hatching eggs and chicks through a sanitation program at breeding farms and hatcheries. It is hoped the program will decrease the marketability of these products and thus lower prices.

Overall, the NPID identifies states, flocks, hatcheries and dealers that meet certain disease-free standards in the development of the NPID's various programs. As a result, customers can buy baby chicks, pullets and hatching eggs that have been disease-free and certified to the standards that have been produced under disease-prevention conditions.
Fall provides best opportunity to control perennial weed problems

Perennial weeds have become a continuing problem for Michigan farmers because of their ability to survive tillage, aging, or no-till practices that have been put into use. “Probably the best opportunity for dealing with all of our common perennial broadleaf weeds using non-selective herbicides is following wheat harvest,” says Jim Kilg, Michigan State University Extension educator. Aknow ledge application of the weeds at the time of year they are most susceptible.

Kilg says the ideal growth stage to control perennial weeds is in the fall prior to the winter season. “Once that stage of growth is reached, they can be treated anytime from then until just prior to a spring tillage. This is referred to as following a planting damage-free fall.”

For maximum effectiveness, the weeds should be at the proper growth stage; be green, healthy and actively growing and not be under moisture stress. Herbicide application should be made several hours ahead of rain, and winds should be calm to reduce potential drift. For herbicide application, the temperature on the day of herbicide application will be around 60°F.

Weeds, Japanese beetles and aphids. Entomologists report that much of Michigan’s cropland could be struck by pests, disease, and weeds in the blueberries and cherries. The program’s purpose is to provide specific answers to growers on harvesting, possibly salting and marketing potatoes that may not have sufficient market life at the time of a killing frost,” says Pat Driscoll, MFRN farm news director. Driscoll says growers can call (517) 627-5526 for more information about the broadcast.

Milk superpool faces collapse

Continued from page 4

The broadcast will originate from the MFRN studios in Lansing.

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Survey reveals: Farmland preservation a serious concern for Michigan public

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ould the state legislature be headed in the wrong direction concerning the preservation of farmland? If the results of a recent survey on the issue are any indication, the answer is an absolute yes.

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

"Obviously people are very concerned about water pollution, air pollution and they're also concerned about preserving Michigan's farmland, which is significant in terms of the legislative issues and the public policies that have been debated and voted on recently," said Michigan Farm Bureau Legislative Council Scott Breen, who was referring to recent legislative action on revisions to the state's Subdivision Control Act.

Other highlights from the survey include:

- Seventy percent say it's very important to preserve farmland and maintain agricultural lands.
- Seventy-four percent agree that urban sprawl within a 20-mile radius of every 10,000 people is a serious concern.
- Seventy percent support development restrictions on the state's farmland.
- Seventy percent agree that public dollars are needed to help fund appropriate restrictions on farmland.

According to the survey results, 49 percent of the respondents fear that urban sprawl will prevent them from being able to raise crops on their land.

"We are pleased to be part of hosting the group around Michigan to demonstrate our ability to produce the beans they need," adds Aloysius Manager of the Field Extension Bob Rohm. "They are very interested in the Indian, Ohio and Michigan region for soybeans because of their higher protein content."

High-quality, food-grade soybeans are ready to pay premium prices to cover the lower yields of these beans. "If a farmer wants to get into growing edible soybeans he should contact a processor in their area, because the edible soybeans have to be harvested, cleaned, bagged and containerized in an identity-preserved process that one must go through beginning with the seed that the end-user wants."

"In effect the grower wants to do something on his own, he has the capability now to contact these people and find out the needs that they want. They should get with the export division of the Michigan Department of Agriculture," he adds.

The Japanese soy food makers are looking for high-quality soybeans and are ready to pay premium prices to cover the lower yields of these beans. "Our guests expressed sincere appreciation to the U.S. soybean growers and to the American Soybean Association for the opportunity to visit Michigan. As a result of our visits, we are all looking forward to increas- ing the business opportunities between Japanese soybean users and Michigan growers," Rohm concluded.

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

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

Supernova Co., Ltd., a food processor, has sent a team to Michigan to select high-quality, food-grade soybeans for sale in Japan. They represent soybean crushers, soy protein makers, soy chemical makers, margarines, shortenings and soybean meal and flour customers.

"If we were to go into the edible soybean market, we would like to sell high-quality soybeans," adds Yoshio's Manager of the Field Extension Bob Rohm. "At this time we are just starting to make 'real progress' in approaching the market." According to Bill Rastem, PSC's vice president, that conflict of values needs to be resolved.

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

Survey reveals: Farmland preservation a serious concern for Michigan public

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Survey reveals: Farmland preservation a serious concern for Michigan public
THERE is no reason at all. I don’t think this will be a big crop.Hog prices are running approximately $.09 above their August average and makethe futures market and myself are not as optimistic and higher-than-expected demand, or for any other reason, deliver your beans and use a basis contract to stay in the market, don’t pay storage.

CATTLE

So, there’s been no great thing about it, but they have been as good or better than I or the USDA left the September estimate of U.S. corn production very close to the August estimate. And we think the market is going to go up with stronger-than-expected demand, or for any other reason, deliver your beans and use a basis contract to stay in the market, don’t pay storage.

CORN

The biggest question for many Michigan corn producers is, how mature is my corn? It is hard to put together a pricing plan whenyou don’t know what kind of crop you are going to have. As it is written the article we had not had a killing frost over large parts of Michigan, but we did know we needed a first frost to get much of the corn maturing. If you think there is a likelihood that you may be harvesting immature corn or silage because of a frost and will probably be closer to the actual amount harvested. The USDA defined a significant change in the Support and Stabilization Program Balance Sheet Report, shown in Table 1 below, by lowering expected 1997-98 exports by 25 million bushels and 30% of the corn export estimate was due to higher-than-previously-expected exports by China and an increase in the world grain production estimate. The fundamentals for corn in table 1 would indicate cash corn prices around $2.65 by March, which would mean March futures around $2.25. If March Futures hit this level buy corn now or have a good reason not to. March futures being what fundamentals suggests, along with the futures spreads paying on-farm storage, supports my above pricing recommendations. However, each farm has a different ability and willingness to handle risk which must be factored into your individual pricing plans.

THE Sept. 1 USDA Crop Report, released Sept. 12, showed a decrease in spring wheat production compared to the August estimate. The USDA incorporated this change into the new season supply estimates which are shown below in Table 2. They left estimated U.S. corn for 1997-98 unchanged from their August estimates, however, they increased the world production estimate which is in positive alignment. However, ending stocks in the United States of 26 percent of use is more than adequate. The futures are saying they will pay 12 cents to store wheat until December and 15 cents after December. For those who have already hired a third to half of your crop for harvest delivery, then consider using a basis contract to stay in the corn market on much of the rest of your corn, which should otherwise be stored commercially. If you had hired little corn earlier, then you may have price some at harvest to avoid downside risk. The September USDA Crop Report showed estimated U.S. corn production very close to the August estimate. And we think the market is going to go up with stronger-than-expected demand, or for any other reason, deliver your beans and use a basis contract to stay in the market, don’t pay storage.

WHEAT

The Sept. 1 USDA Crop Report, released Sept. 12, showed a decrease in spring wheat production compared to the August estimate. The USDA incorporated this change into the new season supply estimates which are shown below in Table 2. They left estimated U.S. corn for 1997-98 unchanged from their August estimates, however, they increased the world production estimate which is in positive alignment. However, ending stocks in the United States of 26 percent of use is more than adequate. The futures are saying they will pay 12 cents to store wheat until December and 15 cents after December. For those who have already hired a third to half of your crop for harvest delivery, then consider using a basis contract to stay in the corn market on much of the rest of your corn, which should otherwise be stored commercially. If you had hired little corn earlier, then you may have price some at harvest to avoid downside risk. The September USDA Crop Report showed estimated U.S. corn production very close to the August estimate. And we think the market is going to go up with stronger-than-expected demand, or for any other reason, deliver your beans and use a basis contract to stay in the market, don’t pay storage.

SOYBEANS

The USDA left the September estimate of U.S. soybean production basically the same as the August estimate, and raised the world production estimate only slightly. However, there were changes made on the use side and those changes have been incorporated into Table 3 below. The 1997-98 crush estimate and export estimate were raised 10 and 5 million bushels respectively compared to the August estimate. The bottom line was estimate went up and supply were down and estimated 97-98 ending stocks ended up 20 million bushels lower. This put ending stocks at 11 percent of use, which fundamentally suggests an average price of $5.15 or March futures around $5.46 per bushel. As of this writing, mid-Michigan new crop soybean prices were about $7.60 and March futures were around $6.50. So in this situation this suggests everyone should be holding at least 10 percent of their expected crop priced now if you haven’t been an early floor. What to do with the rest of your soybean crop really depends on your risk preference and to some degree on whether you agree with the USDA supply and use numbers. I think the USDA numbers are close in the same that there is both a high and downside risk due to unforeseen factors that could enter the market. That is why I recommend being at least 10 percent of your expected crop marketed or at least what USDA fundamentals would suggest.

HOGS

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**Quackgrass control in fall with Roundup Ultra herbicide**

Researchers at the University of Georgia say that researchers are awaiting Food and Drug Administration approval to market their Roundup Ultra herbicide, which has been identified with 18 different strains of the so-called beneficial bacteria. The December seminar includes presentations on key seed issues, panels on emerging technology, exhibits and poster displays.

The Seminar is typically geared toward seed producers; however, the meeting has attracted an increasing number of commercial growers each year. "Appropating new technology is not in itself a solution to survival in the potato industry," said Ben Kudwa, executive director of the MPIC. "Clearly, it takes an experienced grower today to recognize technology and use it as a tool."

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

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

Early in September, Imperial Holly, a major western U.S. sugar refiner, sweetened the purchase deal to Michigan Sugar's parent company Savannah Foods for the entire company Savannah Foods for the entire company Savannah Foods were interested in purchasing Imperial Holly. At a price of $175 million in shares of Imperial Holly common stock, the transaction would total $850 million.

In a statement released by Savannah Foods President and Chief Executive Officer William W. Byrd III, Imperial Holly agreed to acquire the remaining outstanding common stock of Savannah Foods & Industries, Inc. at a price of $175 million in value per share of Savannah Foods common stock, composed of 70 percent and 30 percent Imperial Holly common stock. "The thing I think is important about Michigan, Leach adds, "We are a unique area, we're very efficient and have a low-cost production area and we're located for the Chicago, Detroit and Toledo markets. That makes us important—even though our state isn't, there we have sugar where it's needed."

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

Sugar contracts will be upheld

"There's contracts with growers in place right now that we can't do anything about," Schwers explains. "But we're certainly going to take a look at those contracts and hopefully, between some best quality improvement that we're very strong on, hopefully, we can improve both the grower situation, relative to their yield rates, and develop more acreage."

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

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

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

Officials believe the deal will be finalized by the end of the year as it is not expected any other offers to come forward.

**Market Outlook**

**Continued from page 6**

Farmer prices will continue to suffer the hammer from the dismally low BP (Bureau of Market) midsummer. The full effect of the large jump in the BFP for August will not be felt for many producers until October however. In the last several months, Michigan producer income has substantially benefited from the operation of over-pricing policy and the Michigan Potato Council, however, has introduced the Michigan Superpool structure, additional revenue were obtained to help blunt the disastrous farm prices in the last months. Part of the increase in September prices experienced by all Michigan producers is a result of the operation of the Superpool. Revenue from the sale of individual Michigan dairy farms and processors from the statewide Superpool will further the future use of the Superpool mechanism to deal with disasterously low prices for all Michigan processors.

In conclusion, milk prices are on the way up. Prices should remain with upward price growth through January. Although this year's milk prices will be substantially lower than last year's, the modest increase this fall will be welcome relief from this summer's below-cost milk price levels.
Gordon and Susan Dick, of McBain, have recently been selected as the 1997 Outstanding Young Dairy Cooperators (OYDC). They represented Michigan Milk Producers Association’s (MMPA) District 5 and the Evan Local in the annual OYDC conference held Aug. 13-15. The Dicks were selected earlier this year by fellow dairy farmers in their district to participate in the program.

The Dicks farm in partnership with Gordon’s brother, Ron. They milk 150 cows and farm 600 acres on their Missaukee County farm. The Dicks have three children: Lance, Heidi and Christian. The Johnson farm is a family operation with Dave’s father and brother. They milk 120 cows and farm 400 acres on their Menominee County farm. They have three children: Lance, Heidi and Christian. Selection of OYDC is based on the applicant’s farming operations, farm-related and community activities, and demonstrated leadership abilities.

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

The OYDC program identifies outstanding young leaders in our organization and provides the opportunity for them to gain a greater understanding of milk marketing activities and MMPA,” said D-wood Kirkpatrick, MMPA president.

All the MMPA district OYDCs will be officially recognized at the 1998 Annual State Delegate Meeting to be held next March. The Dicks represent MMPA’s District 5 which covers Osceola, Mecosta, Montcalm, and Gratiot counties.

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

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

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

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

Growers at the meeting said they believed that the organizations are moving in the right direction, providing a more cohesive voice for corn farmers.

"This vote gives the ball rolling in our transition to a new national corn organization," said Wallace Hardie, a corn farmer from Fairview, Iowa, and one of the current NCGA board members.

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

"This vote affirms growers’ willingness to look toward the future and take positive steps to achieve their goals," said Hardie, a corn farmer from Fairview, Iowa. "Completing them requires a fact-based, flexible organization that can strategically plan and act in the many changes that are transforming agriculture.

"Framework, representation, and participation increases for corn farmers under this new approach are important to maintain relationships, and solutions to the many issues growers face are becoming more possible. The new organization provides a more efficient and effective vehicle to serve its members.

"There's an abundance of talent among corn farmers, and our new organization will be able to tap into this talent base by allowing corn growers to select and lend expertise to issues that they feel are important to them without working through a bureaucratic organizational process. Participating farmers' valuable time can be targeted and used more productively," said Hardie, who chaired one of the two study groups that proposed the changes.

"Farmers will work directly on issues that impact the future of their farms. The new organization will be a strong voice on the behalf of corn farmers to address the many issues and concerns facing them."

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

"The process that we've gone through is a very healthy exercise for both organizations, and exercise that leads to increased strength and endurance. As a result of these changes, all members will benefit.

The new organization will be a strong voice in the future of corn farming.
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Weather Outlook

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

By mid-September, seasonal base 50°F growing degree days in many areas of the state had fallen to levels not seen since the 1992 growing season, resulting in further phenological delays in crop growth and development, especially for corn. Mean temperatures for the past 30-day period ranged from 5°F to 6°F below normal. A persistent upper air troughing pattern across the Great Lakes and New England regions was responsible for much of the cool, cloudy weather of the past several weeks, although by mid-September, the jet stream steering currents showed signs of shifting to a more dynamic, quickly-changing pattern, allowing at least temporary incursions of warmer air to return into much of the region.

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

Did they really do those animals a favor?

Animal rights activists celebrated a "victory" recently after successfully releasing 1,100 minks and 200 blue foxes from fur farms near Vasa, Finland. The anti-fur activists were jubilant following their "coup." Their victory will probably be short-lived, however, as most of the animals are expected to die in the wild in a very short time.

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Michigan leading states on cider safety practices

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

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

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

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

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

The GMPs were developed by the Michigan Apple Cider Advisory Group, made up of representatives from the apple industry, Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan State University, Michigan Farm Bureau and the FDA. They were distributed to all Michigan apple cider producers and took effect in June 1997. The GMPs were the result of more than seven months of cooperative effort by the group, which analyzed cider making practices and developed a standard set of requirements and guidelines for Michigan cider producers.

“Michigan has had to report more cases of people getting sick from drinking apple cider,” said Wyant. “These GMPs are a common-sense approach to continued prevention, and push Michigan to ‘front and center’ as a national leader in the production of safe, wholesome and great tasting apple ciders.”

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

A pilot HACCP program will be launched this fall, which will help producers identify steps that can be taken to assess reductions in microbial risk. The whole industry will benefit from model HACCP plans being developed in the state.

In addition, the Michigan Apple Cider Advisory Group will continue to work in the areas of research and development of cider apple cultivars, regulatory officials and consumers. These educational efforts will be enhanced by the work of the Michigan Agribusiness Education Foundation to coordinate the efforts of the staff.

For more information about Michigan’s apple cider initiatives or to request a copy of the Michigan apple cider GMPs, contact MDA Food Technology, Jerry Woyita, at 517-355-0271.

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

About a decade ago, nearly all of Michigan’s wheat was planted to white wheat, much to the delight of the state’s milling industry, partly because the white wheat bran is highly desirable in making milling-by-product, is used in breakfast cereals.

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

Randall Judd, Michigan Crop Improvement Association (MCI) manager, says that white wheat still holds about 80 percent of Michigan's wheat acres, but the ratio has been running 50-50.

“After this season, white wheat seed sales should be about the same as red wheat. It may be in response to the premium being offered for white wheat,” Judd says.

Governor appoints directors to Michigan Beef Industry Commission

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

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

Velmar Green, of Elsie, has been reappointed to represent the cow/calf sector for a term expiring May 31, 2000. He and his wife, Velma, have been partners in a dairy farm and cattleman, is a past member of the national Beef Promotion and Research Board. He is treasurer of Green Meadow Farms, Inc., treasurer of the Michigan Milk Producers Association, treasurer of the Michigan Beef Industry Commission, and a member of Michigan Farm Bureau and the Michigan Cattlemen’s Association.

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

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

MSU food entrepreneur workshop

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


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USDA: Children not following dietary guidelines

A study by the Agriculture Department shows that only 1 percent of American children between ages 2 and 19 are healthy-eating diets as recommended by the department.

USDA guidelines recommend eating six to 11 servings of grains each day, three to five servings of vegetables, two to four servings of fruits, two to three dairy products and five to six ounces of meats. The guidelines also call for 10 percent or less of daily intake of the field with extremely high-quality seed this fall.

The white wheat varieties available from MDA seed producers are Al Box, Bonita, Chloris, Harle, Lowell and Randall. The red varieties available include Cardinal, Freedom, Mendon and Wakefield.

In the past 10 years, Michigan State University wheat variety trials conducted in Harlan, Ingomar, Ionia, Kalamazoo, Lenawee, Saginaw, Sanilac and Tuscola counties this summer. The results are available from the county MSU Extension office or the department and soil sciences at MSU.

Call 517-355-0271.
Michigan Farm Bureau anxious to see new meat regulations

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

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

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

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

• Stop the distribution and order the recall of adulterated or misbranded meat and poultry in situations that pose a reasonable probability of a threat to public health

• Refuse or withdraw inspection authority based on any willful or repeated violation of federal meat or poultry laws

• Impose civil monetary penalties for violations of the meat and poultry laws.

According to Almy, USDA does not need additional recall authority, saying the agency can already retain and condemn meat and poultry products in slaughter and packing plants and can suspend or withdraw inspection services. "This action has always resulted in the shutting down of the plants and the recall of products in circulation," he said. "Every company ever faced with condemnation of product or removal of inspectors has voluntarily complied with USDA recall requests."

Almy is equally critical of the call for new civil penalties in the Glickman proposal, saying they are not necessary. "Under current guidelines, USDA can seek criminal penalties against meat and poultry processors who break the law or regulations or who sell unwholesome meat," he explained. "Additional civil penalties will not improve food safety."

Provisions to encourage adoption of new technology and practices to improve food safety are also absent, notes Almy. "Ironically, although most food-borne illness can be prevented through proper food handling and preparation practices, these practices are not addressed," he said.

Forecasters report: 1997 dry bean crop excellent

The 1997 Michigan dry bean production is forecast at 5,580,000 hundredweight (cwt.), 20 percent above last season's crop, according to the Federal/State Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service.

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

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

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

Acreage for harvest are at 1.75 million, up 2 percent from 1996.

http://www.mf.com/
Pioneer's Constantine plant hosts 20th anniversary celebration

For the first time in its 20-year history, Pioneer Hi-Bred's Constantine seed processing plant opened its doors to over 1,000 customers and the public on Sept. 17 for a two-day "The Bt technology is very good," adds Dave Mason, Pioneer's field sales manager for Michigan. "There was a history last year with heavy corn borer pressure that the technology works quite well. We're telling customers next year we will have an adequate supply to meet the needs of Michigan growers."

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

The Constantine plant produces 40,000 acres a week, representing 32 products ranging from 75-day corn to 138-day varieties. "Right now we're harvesting two different hybrids that are going to be able to see coming in the facility," Garner adds. "Everything is hosed down the ear, so we can process it and make sure we have quality seed going through the storage."

According to Garner, seed harvest begins when moisture reaches the mid 50s and began the second week of September and will go through Oct. 21."We've been real surprised," he adds. "Across all of our hybrids, we'll be 4 to 5 percent above estimates, and the seed quality looks real good."

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

MDA's annual report for 1996 issued

The Michigan Department of Agriculture's Annual Report for 1996 details the agency's significant accomplishments for last year in the areas of food safety, environmental stewardship, support for production agriculture and consumer protection. The Michigan Agricultural Statistics Bulletin for 1996-97 summarizes 1996 Michigan agricultural production. According to MDA Director Dan Wyant, "the report is an important accounting to the citizens of Michigan who expect a high level of service for the investment they make in their government. We hope the commitment of our employees to that public trust is evident in the pages of the report."

Wyant said the combined publication is easy to use and contains some of the most important agricultural data in the state. "The employees of MDA and the Michigan Agricultural Services (MAS) have worked together to present this vital information in a clear and thorough manner."

Highlights of the report include:

- During 1996, MDA established and expanded its partnerships with industry and academia to place the mandate of HACCP in Michigan to prevent outbreaks of food-borne illness. HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points) identifies where hazards might occur in the food production process and puts into place stringent actions to prevent hazards from occurring.
- MDA formed a cider advisory committee to review current cider processing techniques and make recommendations that will further assure food safety. Last year, the department also tested samples from 15 of Michigan's licensed cider producers and found no evidence of E. coli bacteria.
- In 1996, the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program assisted over 3,000 farmers. A total of $2.4 million in grants was provided in the areas of technical support, community education, research and pesticide use surveys. Some 3,083 Farm Assist evaluations were completed to assess risk of groundwater resources and over 1,200 wells in high-risk areas were tested and assessed.
- Michigan's farmland protection program was recognized as a national leader by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The state awarded the state $1 million grant to be used as matching funds to help farmers develop the land rights on protected farmland. The farmland will remain in agricultural use and private ownership.
- Cranberry farming practices, approved by the Commission of Agriculture in 1996, will help Michigan remove a cranberry industry that faded at the turn of the 20th Century. The practices were drafted through a partnership that included government, academia, industry and consumer groups. In September 1996, construction started at a rural site outside Lansing for one of the nation's finest kitchens and laboratories. In less than one year, the doors opened to the facility dedicated to the agronomic, health and measure techniques from all over the country are now being trained there. The lab was named after the late Dr. Edward C. Heffernan, who served as MDA's Food Division Director and who championed the development of the laboratory.
- Wyant said the Michigan Agricultural Statistics Bulletin for 1999-87 is a compilation of data collected from growers and contains special features on fruits and vegetables. The annual bulletins are issued by growers and others in the agricultural industry to make important business decisions.

For a copy of the combined report, write: Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service, PO Box 20008, Lansing, MI 48901-2008. The reports will also be available in the MASS sections of MDA's World Wide Website at http://www.mda.state.mi.us.

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Helpful methods for controlling starling populations in dairy facilities

by Kurt Anderson

Extension Dairy Agent
Huron & Tuscola counties

Dairy farmers are facing a challenge from starlings as they search for sources of food and shelter. Their normal food supply of insects, fruit and grain is unavailable. Dairy farmers are attractive to starlings because they provide all of their needs: water, food, and shelter. While this situation is fine for the birds, it is very different for dairy producers.

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

The starling was native to the United States. An emerging international back in the 1890s believed that America should have every bird mentioned in William Shakespeare's plays and brought them from Europe. The bird's habit of consuming insects did make it seem attractive. As starlings spread across the country they became a nuisance. They moved into urban areas and into feedlots causing feed and annoying property owners with their noise and filth. Research has shown that every 100 birds present, about 500 pounds of feed are lost per month. The dollar loss for a large farm can be significant.

Helpful guide for calculating cost of milk production

With dairy prices so near the record levels of a year ago, many producers are looking for ways to cut costs from parts of their operations. Below is a worksheet developed by MSU department of agricultural economics' Dr. Sterril Not. It estimates the cost of milk production per hundredweight using an individual's income form.

According to Dr. Not, the worksheet allocates costs between dairy enterprises and all other enterprises, such as hay and silage, by assuming the cost of other enterprises are equal to their gross sales. While this makes the worksheet gross sales of non-milk items from total farm cash expenses. Expenses include interest, but not principal payments. This is a simplifying assumption that tends to overstate the dollars allocated to non-milk expenses. Cost of milk production therefore underestimates.

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

USDA announces new voluntary program to develop wildlife habitat

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman recently announced a new program that will help farmers and landowners protect critically important wildlife habitat. USDA's Wildlife Incentives Program (WHIP) is a land management - rather than a project implementation - program.

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

WHIP will help to meet landowners voluntarily develop habitat for wildlife on private lands that currently account for 70 percent of the land in this country," Glickman said. "WHIP also offers farmers and ranchers an opportunity to meet their production needs in ways that are compatible with providing fish and wildlife habitat."

A number of habitats are rapidly disappearing. These include many of the native grasslands, savannas, and prairies in certain types of wetlands. Other habitats such as wetlands, prairie fowl, fowl, and streams have suffered a serious decline in quality or quantity. "Some habitat losses are due more to the decline in fish and wildlife populations. WHIP will landowners the opportunity to put back some of these precious habitats," Glickman said.

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

"Under the program," Glickman said, "landowners may use waterfowl or upland bird populations to the greatest wildlife benefits will be funded.

For more information, landowners may contact USDA Service Centers and NRCS, which administers the program.
**Profitability in beef cow-calf herds**

By Dr. Paul H. Cole

Michigan's cow-calf industry looks to the future as new technologies improve the bottom line. Higher prices for feeder cattle, from $9.00 to $15.00 per 100 lbs. in 1998, are an example of steps being taken to improve profitability. With average herd size increased, producers must find new strategies to increase profitability.

**Handling troublesome pests in corn**

Corn hybrids can naturally get rid of one of the most damaging insects known to farmers, theuario weed. Common lombards are a native to the United States and Europe, and they are highly competitive with corn plants. The Illinois Natural Heritage Survey estimates that common lombards can outyield corn by as much as 30%

Common lombards (Chenopodium album) can be controlled with herbicides or by planting resistant hybrids. IMI-Corn™, a hybrid with improved herbicide tolerance, provides excellent control of common lombards and other grasses and broadleaf weeds. IMI-Corn™ seed is available from Garst Seed Company, a trademark of American Cyanamid Company, and is marketed in the United States for crop safety and deliver more yield year after year. For more information, call 1-888-GO-GARST.

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

The home gardener knows that it doesn't take much for weeds to get out of control. So does the corn farmer who manages hundreds of acres. No wonder they are both looking for weed control options. Some of the toughest weed problems farmers encounter don't have satisfactory solutions until a few years later. That's why Garst is working to develop hybrid corn varieties that control weeds naturally. One example is the Garst IMI-Corn™ hybrid, which is engineered to resist common lombards (Chenopodium album). This hybrid is available from Garst Seed Company, a trademark of American Cyanamid Company, and is marketed in the United States for crop safety and deliver more yield year after year. For more information, call 1-888-GO-GARST.
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