

AGRI-FOCUS

July 2007



New Incentives for Tree Fruit Producers

Tree fruit producers are encouraged to attend one of the following workshops to learn more about the new incentive payments starting in 2008. Orchardists will be eligible for cost share funds for integrated pest management and other resource-conserving practices on their farms. Funding is through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) offered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Informational workshops to help you determine your eligibility and how to outline a competitive application are scheduled for the following dates and locations. All workshops will be held from 3:00-5:30pm:

Tonasket – Tuesday, July 10, at Holy Rosary Catholic Church

Royal City – Thursday, July 12, at Royal High School

Yakima – Monday, July 16, at former Pizza Hut on 1st Street and Lincoln

Prosser – Tuesday, July 17 at WSU Prosser IAREC (Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center), 24106 N Bunn Road

Wenatchee – Thursday, July 19 at WSU Wenatchee Tree Fruit Research and Extension Center, 1110 N Western Avenue

Visit <http://www.treefruitresearch.com/eqip-program-information/> or contact Naná Simone, Tree Fruit EQIP Coordinator, for more information and to RSVP, 509-667-9557, nanas@nwi.net.
K.M. Lewis

Details of COOL Comment Period

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) re-opened the comment period for the Proposed Rule (PR) for mandatory country of origin labeling (COOL) for beef, lamb, pork, perishable agricultural commodities and peanuts.

Persons providing comments should take into account that the agency has changed some definitions and requirements in the interim final rule for fish and shellfish, which was published after the PR that would now be applicable to all covered commodities.

The Federal Register posting with the details of the comment period is located at <http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20071800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2007/07-3029.htm>.

USDA published the PR for mandatory COOL of beef, lamb, pork, perishable agricultural commodities and peanuts in the Oct. 30, 2003 Federal Register. The PR requires designated retailers and their suppliers to notify customers of the country of origin of covered commodities. The PR also requires retailers and their suppliers to maintain specific records to verify claims. The full text of the PR can be found at www.ams.usda.gov/cool/ls0304.pdf. Comments submitted on or before Aug. 20 will be considered. S. M. Smith

Agri-Focus via E-mail

The Agri-Focus can now be delivered to your e-mail box. Please send your contact information to jkerner@wsu.edu or call 509.754.2011 x411 if you wish to be added to our electronic mailing list. We currently send the newsletter to over 1000 addresses each month. Our goal is to reduce costs and waste, and provide the most convenient method of delivery.

Washington State Workers' Tractor Fatalities Can Be Prevented

Rollovers are the number one type of fatal tractor incident in Washington State. Here are some things you can do to safeguard yourself and those working on your farm:

- 1) Use caution when operating tractors on or near sloped terrain, embankments, or ditches.
- 2) Reduce speed when crossing slopes, turning at the end of a row or towing equipment and implements.
- 3) Do not operate on slopes that are too steep or slippery.
- 4) Back up steeper slopes, if they cannot be avoided.
- 5) Keep front-end loaders low, and hitches low and on the drawbar. Only tow loads from the rear hitch.
- 6) Match the tractor to the size of the load. Add front weights if necessary to balance the implement load.
- 7) Train operators how to safely operate a tractor.

Surviving a Tractor Rollover:

- 1) Install a rollover protective structure (ROPS).
- 2) Wear a seatbelt.

Run-overs are the second-leading cause of fatal tractor-related incidents in the state:

- 1) Start the tractor's engine from the operator's seat. Do not start the engine while standing beside the tractor. Avoid bypass starting.
- 2) When starting a tractor, be sure it is not in gear.
- 3) Operate the tractor from the operator's seat. Do not stand or sit on any other part of the tractor while it is in motion.
- 4) Wear a seatbelt, and assure that ROPS is installed.
- 5) Do not get on or off a tractor in motion. Do not walk or run beside a tractor in motion.
- 6) Turn off ignition before doing maintenance.
- 7) Consider installing a safe tractor access platform, if the tractor is not already equipped with one.
- 8) Consider installing a "dead man" seat brake that operates when seat is vacated, similar to that which is used in forklifts and other industrial equipment.

Another way to prevent run-overs is to retrofit older tractors to provide the operator with a safe means of mounting and dismounting. This can be achieved by attaching a running board, steps, or platform known as a safe tractor platform. The safe tractor platform allows the operator to mount and dismount from the outer edge of the rear wheel instead of in the front. The platform should provide hand-holds, be slip resistant, and help prevent the operator from starting the tractor while standing on the ground. The safe access platform addresses several of the causes of run-overs by keeping possible injury victims from falling or standing in the area between the tractor's front and rear wheels. Tractor owners should check with the manufacturer before installing or modifying the structure of equipment. Any hardware should be properly designed and engineered to assure the integrity and safety of the system, and not compromise the operating capabilities of the tractor.

- 19 farmers and farm workers died in tractor-related incidents in Washington State between 1998 and 2006.
- 10 of the 19 incidents involved the rollover or overturn of a tractor.
- 8 of the 10 tractors that rolled over had no ROPS. It is not known whether the other 2 tractors had ROPS installed due to lack of available investigation information.

WISHA Consultation Program, Washington State Department of Labor and Industries,
<http://www.LNI.wa.gov/Safety/KeepSafe/Assistance/Consultation>

Source: SHARP / FACE/WA, Fatal Facts March 1. 2007 Report #47-12-2007. K.M. Lewis

Timothy Breeders Advance in Nitrogen Use, Digestibility and Persistence

Nitrogen use efficiency: Canadian breeders developed timothy lines that contained greater whole-plant nitrogen concentrations (good for protein), more and larger leaves, yet did not increase nitrate concentration (bad if in excess) with no decrease in hay yields with the same level of nitrogen applied. They did this by selecting plants with greater plant nitrogen concentrations per pound of nitrogen fertility applied. This methodology, when used by timothy breeders should provide new varieties that improve the economics of growing timothy for hay and pasture and potentially improve ground water quality.

Improved digestibility: Usually, selection for increased digestibility *per se* in forage plants will result in plants with weaker stems or plants with increased leaf to stem ratios. Breeders at Ag Canada have developed timothy lines with greater digestibility by selecting for the decreased ratio of lignin (poorly digestible portion of cell walls) to cellulose. They found this selection criterion to be stable and heritable. They anticipated morphological changes to timothy, such as shorter plants or plants with thinner stems or larger diameter stems, but found that digestibility increased without any changes in the physical structure of the plants. They did not measure forage yield directly, however, but speculate that since no morphological changes were evident, that no yield loss should result in this type of selection. They concluded that timothy can be bred to have higher digestibility without any loss of yield.

Persistence under frequent harvests: USDA scientists in Wisconsin are looking at 'turf' type timothy types to breed with common hay types for increasing tolerance to harvest frequency. Turf type timothy from old turf sods developed naturally by the conversion of old timothy hayfields into mowed parks, cemeteries, and urban lawns. As timothy plants survived frequent mowing in these urban settings over the past 35 years or so, new ecotypes developed.

Timothy reproduces by seeds and by corms, swollen underground stem bases. Individual corms live only two years, so persistence over several years depends on the continual production of new corms. Frequent harvests of timothy increases the death rate of corms by over 90%, which explains why some timothy fields that are harvested up to three times per year in the Columbia Basin become weedy with cheatgrass and barnyardgrass in the third production year. Early maturing varieties (Summit, Talon) are more tolerant to frequent cutting than medium or late maturing types (Climax, Charlton).

In their forage yield trials, turf types yielded as much and sometimes greater than common varieties in both 2-cut and 4-cut systems and had almost twice the number of heads in the later harvests. The scientists conclude that turf type timothy lines may be a valuable and unique source of germplasm for timothy improvement through breeding. J. Kugler

Residue Management at Harvest is the Key to Successful High Residue Planting

The residue management that you do this year at harvest will determine if you will be successful in a high residue planting next year. Consider these residue management practices for the following crops.

Wheat: Spread straw and chaff uniformly behind the header. As wider combine headers become more common, it becomes more of a challenge to spread the residue back out over the cutting width. Cutting crops as high as possible will reduce the amount of residue the combine needs to spread, and will speed up harvest operations. Add-on chaff and straw spreaders are available for combines of all brands. If the remaining residue is too high for your seeding equipment, a cheap mowing or flailing operation can be used. Heavy harrows can be used to break up straw after harvest to speed decomposition.

Corn: Paul Jasa, no-till specialist at the University of Nebraska, advises that it is much easier to plant through residues that are “upright and attached.” If stalks are going to be grazed, limit the stocking rate to 1 AUM/acre/month to prevent the cattle from knocking down all the upright stalks. Read more tips in the 2005 High Residue Farming workshop digest on our website (a 2006 workshop digest is coming soon).

All Crops: Avoid soil compaction at harvest. The impacts of soil compaction on your crop can eliminate any savings from reducing tillage and maintaining residues. Serious soil compaction can only be alleviated through expensive, deep tillage of relatively dry soils. It is much better to avoid compaction than to have to treat it.

If your residue management does not give you the desired conditions, consider strip tilling (more on this in next month’s newsletter) or reduced tillage. It may be tempting to make a pass with the disk in the spring “just to clean things up a bit.” Remember that whatever system you use, your goal is uniform planting conditions which promote uniform emergence and high yields. Research has shown that a three-pass disk system often gives better results than a one-pass disking. See *Resources* for more information. A. McGuire

Pacific Northwest Livestock Producers Have Additional Risk Management Choices

The Risk Management Agency (RMA) Spokane Regional Office announced the availability of the Livestock Risk Protection (LRP) program in all counties in Idaho, Oregon and Washington. These LRP plans of insurance are available for fed cattle, feeder cattle, and swine.

Livestock Risk Protection insurance provides coverage to protect the policyholder against downward price risk during the insurance period, covering a change in price peril. The insurance protection does not include any other peril, such as mortality, condemnation, physical damage, disease, individual marketing decisions, local price deviations, or any other cause of loss.

There are two steps involved in obtaining LRP coverage:

- 1) Producers must submit an application. Once the application is approved, the livestock crop insurance provider will assign a policy number.
- 2) The producer activates coverage at any time by applying for a Specific Coverage Endorsement (SCE). No insurance coverage is provided until the producer submits an SCE. Insurance will attach immediately upon RMA’s confirmation of acceptance of the SCE.

Premiums are due on the day LRP insurance endorsement is purchased and includes a 13 percent USDA subsidy of the LRP premium. To determine a premium, the insured will select the appropriate insurance period corresponding to the expected sell or slaughter date; choose a coverage price based on the chosen coverage period; provide the number of livestock expected to be ready for sale or slaughter at the end date and the target weight at time of slaughter; and the percentage share of ownership in livestock to be insured.

Sales for the 2008 crop year will begin July 1, 2007 and continue through June 30, 2008 or until the maximum underwriting capacity (as established by the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation) is reached. Cattle and swine producers are encouraged to contact a local livestock insurance agent to learn additional details. Federal crop insurance program policies are sold and delivered solely through private crop and livestock insurance companies. A list of livestock and crop insurance agents is available at all USDA Service Centers throughout the U.S. or at the RMA Web site address: <http://www3.rma.usda.gov/tools/agents/>. S.M. Smith

Calendar

July

- 10-19 Washington Tree Fruit Commission EQIP Workshops. Orchardists may be eligible for cost share funds for integrated pest management and other resource-conserving practices on their farms. Visit <http://www.treefruitresearch.com/eqip-program-information/> or contact Naná Simone, Tree Fruit EQIP Coordinator, to RSVP. Tel: 509.667.9557, nanas@nwi.net.
- 20-21 Washington State Sheep Producers Ram and Ewe Sale. Grant County Fairgrounds, Moses Lake. Visit <http://www.wssp.org> or contact Jami Beintema at 509.968.9360 or wssp@elltel.net.



Sarah M. Smith – Animal Sciences
M. Christine Price – County Director,
Family and Consumer Science Educator
Andy McGuire – Ag Systems
John Kugler – Agronomy/Forage
Diane Russo – 4-H/Youth Development
Karen M. Lewis – Tree Fruit

Layout and design provided by Jenelle Kerner, a member of the WSU Grant-Adams Extension team.

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Cooperating agencies: Washington State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Grant and Adams Counties. Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension office.

Resources:

Unless stated otherwise, you may request a print version of these resources:

Tips for No-tilling Corn on Corn, UNL,
<http://cropwatch.unl.edu/archives/2007/2007CropWatch.htm>

Underlined resources are available online through links from our homepage:

<http://grant-adams.wsu.edu>

E-mail: mcprice@wsu.edu

Mail: Courthouse, PO Box 37
Ephrata, WA 98823
509.754.2011
509.765.2160
Fax: 509.754.0163
Toll Free: 1.800.572.0119

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