



U.P. Ag Connections Newsletter

December 2018

Agricultural News from MSU Extension and AgBioResearch

Volume 22 Issue 12

In this issue:

Page 2
New Beginning Farmers
Series offered online
Dairy farmer survey

Page 3
Pesticide Applicator
Training sessions
Crop nutrient management
programs

Page 4
Linking school garden to farm
Reducing Crop Production
Costs

Page 5
Market Report
Classifieds
Romaine lettuce safety

Page 6-7
Advertisers

Page 8
Calendar of events

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News and Views

By Frank Wardynski

Last month I wrote about the financial hardship that farmers in about every sector of agriculture have been experiencing. That hardship has placed emotional strain and stress on many farmers and their families. I know the feeling, I was there. And I still remember how everyone had the advice of how to turn it all around. Sales people had the latest and most cost effective products to buy. Even extension staff had all the latest production management practices to save money, cost effective practices.

I remember thinking to myself, "They just don't get it. I'm not in a bad financial situation because I'm a high cost producer or that I don't know where I should and shouldn't spend money. I took on too much debt when beef prices were low and beef prices didn't rebound as early as I needed them to." What I really needed was a time machine to go back and not buy so many cows. Or better yet, get better prices.

So when I listen to sales people tell me about the types of forages I should grow or how much lime and fertilizer I should apply, it would drive me crazy. And now I do it too. I talk about developing no-till systems for heavy red clay. Cover crop systems to fit into livestock systems as harvested forage or pasture. Sure, I think those programs are useful. But not as useful as learning how to explain to my lender why I'm only making interest payments with minimal balance payments or how to determine which inputs are truly necessary and which ones aren't.

One of the differences between programs that require long term management changes to see benefit and those dealing with today's situation is quite simple, how long before we see return. Almost never will a no-till planting increase revenue the first year. Year after year of developing a system with minimal or no yield loss can have great impact on developing soil that is healthy, has improved water holding capacity and withstands hoof traffic much better than tilled soils in wet clay. Through my experiences, I developed some rule of thumb Do's and Don'ts.

Don't:

1. Underfeed the commodity. An old-timer once told me, you can starve a profit out of a cow. Feed and fertilizer is not the place to save money. If you have been fertilizing to build soil nutrients, then sure, you may be able to cut back to crop removal rates. But cutting beyond that will just reduce yields. Cutting back on feed with reduced gain, milk production, fertility rates, and body condition is costing you money and reducing income.
2. Start new management practices for the long term gain. If you haven't spent money on it yet, let it wait.

Do:

1. Get lean. Learn what you need and don't need. Sell the unneeded.
2. Look for opportunities to generate income (added value). Preconditioning calves, sell weaned deacon calves rather than at one week, evaluate holding culls for better market.
3. Look for true opportunities to save money. Extending the grazing season and reducing use of stored feed is huge cost savings. Just make sure they are grazing and not just standing on grass with nothing to eat.
4. Live off of some depreciation. Minimizing asset purchases today and hopefully utilize depreciation schedule to keep income tax payment low can help with cash flow and principal payments. Realize it usually will decrease net worth.
5. Evaluate financial statements: Is cash flow the real problem? Are too many loans short and intermediate term? Will loan extensions help? Or just prolong agony? Is the farm making money but there isn't enough to pay debt, or maybe the other way around.
6. INCREASE communication with your lender. It's human nature to not want to have those conversations. But we need to know, those conversations are critical to both the long and short term success of the farm.

New beginning farmers series offered on-line by MSU Extension

People who are exploring new farm businesses will benefit from participating in the MSU Extension 2019 Beginning Farmer Webinar Series. From January – April 2019, MSU Extension will offer 12 on-line, Wednesday evening programs that provide valuable start-up information on general and more specific farming topics, including:

“Getting started with....”

- ... Jan 16, The physical labor of farming
- ... Jan 23, Growing specialty mushrooms
- ... Jan 30, Pruning fruit trees
- ... Feb 6, Soil physical properties for field and hoophouse
- ... Feb 13, Seed saving
- ... Feb 20, Small farm business start-up
- ... Feb 27, Small farm meat chicken production
- ... March 6, Pruning small fruits
- ... March 13, Quality hay and pasture
- ... March 20, Selling to wholesale buyers
- ... March 27, Cover crop types and uses on your farm
- ... April 3, Farm financial management: The next step

A fee of \$5 per webinar is required, or you can register for the entire series for \$30.00. Webinar recordings will be provided to all registered participants. Participate from the comfort and convenience of your own home or office. Registration, a brochure containing details on each individual program, and on-line or mailed payment options can be found at <https://events.anr.msu.edu/begfrmr19/> after **December 7. If you experience any problems with registration, please contact us (information below).** You may register for all or some of the courses at any time, even if the session has already taken place. In that case, you will get a link to the recorded program.

Each one-hour, Wednesday night webinar begins at 7pm eastern time. A high-speed internet connection is required. You will receive webinar connection information after you register.

Several archived recordings of MSU Extension Beginning Farmer Webinars on a variety of topics from previous years are available for viewing at http://msue.anr.msu.edu/program/info/beginning_farmer_webinar_series.

Contact the Alger County MSU Extension office at 906-387-2530 or isleibj@msu.edu for more information.

Dairy Farmer Survey

The use of beef semen on dairy farms has increased as dairy farmers look at options to add market value to calves not needed for herd replacements.

We would like to learn more about how dairy producers are making decisions about using beef semen in their herds. This information will help us determine how to best help dairy producers in meeting their goals to enhance herd profitability.

A survey has been developed jointly by Extension educators from University of Wisconsin, Iowa State University and Michigan State University. This survey includes questions about:

- Proportion of your dairy cows and heifers being mated to beef sires
- Selection criteria for cows and heifers to be mated to beef sires
- Selection criteria for beef sires
- Marketing outlets that you use for your dairy-beef crossbred calves

You may respond to this survey by accessing https://uwex.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_01b6tq3YVEWFpfn

All responses are voluntary. The survey will be available through December 15, 2018.

We greatly appreciate your time to complete this survey. If you have any questions or would like to request a paper copy of the survey, please contact Kathy Lee, MSU Extension dairy educator at 231-839-5850 or leeka@msu.edu.

MSU Extension offering crop nutrient management programs around U.P.

A series of educational programs targeting farmers, large and small, is planned for three U.P. locations. These meetings will address questions posed by local farmers concerning soil nutrient balances as reported on soil tests, soil microbial activity and its impact on crop production, efficient use of commercial fertilizers and manures, and reducing crop production costs. Soil improvement techniques, including tillage practices, crop rotations and cover crops will also be addressed. There is no charge for these meetings.

Wednesday, January 9, 2019, 6:30 – 8:00pm

Rudyard Twp Hall, 18725 S. Mackinac Trail, Rudyard 49780

Monday, February 4, 2019, 6:30 – 8:00pm

MSU Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center, E3774 University Drive, Chatham, MI 49816

Wednesday, February 11, 2019, 6:30 – 8:00pm

Mass City Community Center, 1502 Mass Avenue, Mass City

Pre-registration is required at least one work day prior to the program you plan to attend to ensure adequate participation. Register on-line at <https://events.anr.msu.edu/UP2019nutrmgmt/> or by phoning or emailing your name, address, phone number and email information to Jim Isleib at 906-387-2530 or isleibj@anr.msu.edu.

MSU Extension is offering pre-exam study sessions for those seeking state pesticide applicator certification.

Locations/Dates:

MSU Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center, E3774 University Drive, Chatham, MI 49816

Friday, December 7, 2018, 9am – 1pm ET State exam offered at 1:15pm ET

Marquette County Negaunee Service Center (downstairs meeting room), 184 US 41 East, Negaunee, MI 49866

Wednesday, January 17, 2019, 9am-1pm CT State exam offered at 1:15pm ET

State Office Building, 305 Ludington St, 2nd Floor Conference Room, Escanaba, MI 49829

Tuesday, February 6, 2019, 9am-1pm ET State exam offered at 1:15 ET

These 4-hour reviews are intended to help prepare for the State of Michigan commercial and private pesticide applicator certification exams. Four re-certification credits toward renewal of current State of Michigan Pesticide Applicator Certification are available for private applicators and commercial applicator 'core'. Additional category credits, including 1A, 1B, 1C, 2, 3A, 3B and 6 are being applied for. The program will consist of chapter reviews of the National Pesticide Applicator Certification Core Manual and an example exam. It is strongly suggested that participants acquire copies of the manual and study it thoroughly before taking the state exam. If seeking commercial certification or re-certification, the study manual for the category(s) desired should also be acquired and studied. This program will cover only 'core' manual material, no commercial categories. Please note that several other state pesticide applicator exam opportunities are offered in the U.P. without pre-exam study sessions. Check exam dates by entering as a 'guest' at <https://secure1.state.mi.us/opes/Welcome.aspx>.

A State of Michigan official will offer state exams after the review is completed. If you plan to take an exam, register at www.michigan.gov/pestexam and be prepared to pay \$50 for the private exam and \$75 for the commercial exam (including any number of categories) by check payable to "State of Michigan". A waiver from the State of Michigan is offered to honorably discharged veterans seeking private pesticide applicator certification. You must provide a copy of your veteran's federal form DD-214 that indicates honorable discharge status along with your application.

Lunch will not be provided. A 1/2 hour break is scheduled between the review and the exams for participants to have lunch. If taking an exam, bring your own lunch, or plan for a very quick lunch break.

A \$20 fee, payable at the door, is required for the pre-exam review offered by MSU Extension. If paying by check, make check out to "Michigan State University Extension". This fee covers program costs and refreshments. (Note: This is a separate fee from the State of Michigan exam fee).

Shining a spotlight on Agriculture Education: Linking the school garden to the farm

Teaching students about the seed cycle, commercial food production and careers in agriculture

By Monica Jean and Abbey Palmer

Michigan State University Extension Staff and Educators in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan have been creating opportunities for youth to experience agriculture. Next-generation concerns exist in our farming community, with only one FFA program existing in the U.P. Our approach was land-based learning. Start Seeds/Save Seeds gives students the opportunity to learn about where food comes from and to explore potential careers in agriculture and food systems. Participating schools receive seeds, transplants, educational activities, and technical assistance for their school gardens or hoop houses. Start Seeds/Save Seeds encourages teachers and students to think of their school garden as a place to grow seeds as well as food. When students learn about seeds, they can also study plant life cycles, study basic genetics, learn the history of our most common food plants, and start gaining exposure to careers in food systems. The program was launched in 2015 with three schools in Marquette and Alger counties to provide technical assistance and experiential learning opportunities.

After two years of grassroots support from MQT Growth and Transition Marquette County, the program sought additional funding from the Central Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Regional Commission to expand to eleven schools in four counties in 2018. Students got to visit a farm, exposing them to food production and a first-hand look at the food system. The students also received a classroom visit including a taste testing of local foods and a presentation on potential careers that exist in agriculture. We decided to make milk our local food to share, showing pictures of a local dairy farm, a video of a cow getting milked and brought corn silage to explain how a crop is grown to feed the cow. After explaining what it takes to make a gallon of milk, student sampled locally produced chocolate milk and were shown how to identify the source of the milk by the code on the bottle. If you want to find out where your milk come from, enter the code from your bottle on whereismilkfrom.com.

Four hundred and fifty three students and teachers participated in this program. We were able to capture feedback from seventy-five students; the average student agreed:

- They know more about possible jobs in agriculture
- They plan to start seed saving at home or in school
- They could describe the cycle of seed saving
- They could identify a crop or product produced on local farms

When kids participate in the process from growing and eating the plant, they have the opportunity to see themselves within the larger food system. They start to look at their relationship to food -- whether that is in their garden, at the farmers' market, or at the grocery store -- as a dynamic process that involves specialized knowledge and many hands across the food system.

For inquiries please contact Abbey Palmer at palmerab@msu.edu or Monica Jean at atkinmon@msu.edu.

This article was published by [Michigan State University Extension](http://www.msue.msu.edu). For more information, visit <http://www.msue.msu.edu>. To have a digest of information delivered straight to your email inbox, visit <http://www.msue.msu.edu/newsletters>. To contact an expert in your area, visit <http://expert.msue.msu.edu>, or call 888-MSUE4MI (888-678-3464).

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Reducing Crop Production Costs

December 18th, 2018

Workshop #1: Menominee Co. MSUE office
8:30-10:30 am CT
S. 904 Highway 41 Stephenson, MI

Workshop #2: Delta Co. MSUE office
6:00 – 8:00 pm ET
2840 College Ave. Escanaba, MI

Workshop includes:

- ◆ Local research results to improve your bottom line
- ◆ Financial analysis of protein sources
- ◆ Soil management to save a buck
- ◆ On-farm research: how to collect your own data

Questions or concerns:

Monica Jean, MSU Field Crop Extension Educator
(906)786-3032 or atkinmon@anr.msu.edu

Will Romaine Lettuce be Safe to Eat Again?

The FDA's latest call to all consumers to stop at once the purchase and consumption of romaine lettuce until further notice was issued on November 20, 2018. This cautionary blanket warning comes to us so soon after the last deadly *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreak this spring, which sickened hundreds and killed five people. With two major outbreaks in one year, you may be wondering if lettuce will ever really be safe to eat. The short answer is, yes. But until the FDA completes its traceback recall determining the contamination point(s), here are a few key things to keep in mind:

First, no amount of washing or rinsing your romaine lettuce can remove *E. coli* O157:H7 from your lettuce and purchased romaine should be discarded. The broad FDA recall includes a voluntary withdrawal of romaine supply to all wholesale and grocery suppliers, so you likely won't see any more romaine for sale until the FDA gives the go-ahead. FDA's warning is met in full solidarity and support from the Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement (LGMA) and seven other produce industry groups. The LGMA, in addition to echoing the FDA's warning, is participating in a group of food safety experts to aid in pinpointing the outbreak source, using their extensive traceback data.

If you or someone you know gets sick as a result of eating contaminated romaine, it is very important that you contact your health care provider to confirm the symptoms are caused by an *E. coli* O157:H7 illness. Once the symptoms are confirmed, the illness can be reported by visiting the website: www.FDA.gov/Safety/Medwatch and clicking on the button "Report a Problem". Submitting your confirmed case, and any packaging details, if available, on where your romaine originated, helps FDA investigators in their traceback efforts. Until more progress is made with the outbreak investigation, consumers can be solaced with the fact that food borne illnesses are not occurring more than they used to, as it might appear. Rather, improved traceback protocols allow outbreaks to be more easily identified and communicated. It should also be noted that the FDA warning is limited to romaine lettuce, and other leafy greens including iceberg, green leaf, and spinach are not impacted by this recall.

By Landen Tetil, Produce Safety Technician, Marquette Conservation District

HAPPY COWS LIVE IN MICHIGAN

Overview: This program is designed for dairy farm owners and managers to learn about the latest research and strategies to improve efficiency with animal welfare in mind. Topics include: importance of continual improvement in efficiency, heat stress and its implications, stocking density and the impact on feet and legs, strategies to maintain a stable rumen, and calf and heifer management for improved well-being and profit.

Presenters: MSU Extension Dairy Educators

Dates and Locations: January 29, 8:30- 11:30 a.m.

Live Broadcast to Menominee County MSUE and Upper Peninsula Research Extension Center

Details: Contact Monica Jean (906) 786-3032, atkinmon@msu.edu or Frank Wardynski (906) 884-4386, wardynsk@msu.edu

Market Report

Choice Steers	\$95—\$114 per 100 lbs.
Holstein Steers	\$68—\$95 per 100 lbs.
Hogs	\$52—\$58 per 100 lbs.
Lambs	\$110—\$140 per 100 lbs.
Cull cows	\$30—\$45 per 100 lbs.
Calves	\$10—\$45 per 100 lbs.
Goats	\$150—\$220 per 100 lbs.

Breeding and Feeder Animals

Grade Holstein cows \$1000—\$1525/head

Grade Holstein bred heifers \$1000—\$1625/head

Feed Prices across the U.P.

	Avg. \$/cwt	Avg. \$/ton	Price Range
Corn	\$9.60	\$191.95	\$146-256
Soymeal	\$19.59	\$391.75	\$370-450
Oats	\$11.99	\$239.75	\$199-300
Barley	\$9.78	\$195.50	\$160-240
Average price/100 wt. for 1 ton lots			

Classifieds

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Calendar of Events

Pesticide Applicator Training –Core manual review—December 7 —MSU UPREC, Chatham, 9 am-1 pm
Reducing Crop Production Costs Workshop—December 18 —Menominee and Delta Co. MSUE Offices
UP Crop Nutrient Management Meeting—January 9 — Rudyard Township Hall, Rudyard, 6:30-8:00 pm
MSUE Beginning Farmer Webinar Series —January 16, 23, 30 through April 3—online
Pesticide Applicator Training –Core manual review—January 17—Negaunee Service Center, Negaunee, 9 am-1 pm
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UP Crop Nutrient Management Meeting—February 11 —Mass City Comm Center, Mass City, 6:30-8:00 pm
MSUE Field Crop Webinar Series—February 18-April 1—online
Christmas Tree Grower Educational Workshop—March 19—Delta Co. MSUE Office, 1-3 pm

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