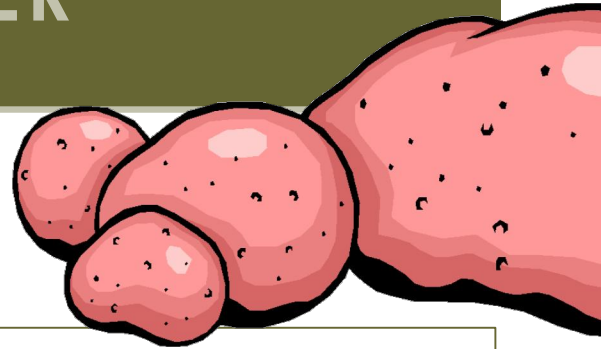


LANGLADE AG-LETTER

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Crop Expenses 2006

Alex Crockford, Langlade County Extension

Are you concerned about your cropping expenses for 2006? Petroleum is the basis or raw material for farm fuels, fertility treatments and pesticides and has had and will continue to have an affect on the entire production system from soil to table.

According to the USDA Economic Research Service, cost increases will be across the board for 2006. Fertilizer expenses, in particular, are expected to rise much more slowly than the double-digit increases in the preceding 2 years. The 6.5-percent increase in overall fertilizer prices is less than half the price increases in 2004 and 2005.

Prices for fuels and oils are expected to drop in 2006, but the annual average will still be 9.6 percent higher than in 2005. Prices will be highest in the first two quarters when the greatest amount of fieldwork is done. The price increases of the last 4 years, including 2006, spurred the adoption of fuel-saving farming techniques. However, the steady rise in fuel prices has hampered farmers' use of pre-purchasing as a strategy to lock in lower prices.

The question for farm managers reading this is... "What are you going to do about it?"

It might be possible to reduce production expenses
 Please see *Production Costs* on page 3

Kame Oats

A New, High-Yielding, Early Maturity Oat

Kame is an early high yielding oat developed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Kame has excellent crown rust resistance. It is about 2 days later than Dane and similar in height to Dane. Kame has significantly higher yields and better standability than Dane and Moraine. Released in 2005, Kame oats is exclusively licensed by Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF) to Wisconsin Crop Improvement (WCIA). Seed is available for 2006 planting. In Wisconsin trials Kame performed well against other top varieties such as Esker and Drumlin. According to the relative grain yield of oat varieties in Minnesota in multiple year comparisons (2003-2005), Kame was the top in yield.

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MARCH

3/6... Apple Grafting Workshop
 Marathon County UW Extension

3/7... Managing Your 2006 Crop Production Costs
 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. Shawano Courthouse - Rooms 4A & B
 Common Sense Fertilizer Management On Rental Ground. What's Ahead For Fuel Costs In 2006?
 Reducing Fertilizer Costs For Alfalfa And Corn Silage.
 There is no fee for the program but we would appreciate a call to the Shawano UWEX Office to help us plan for food and printed materials (715-526-6136).

3/9... Central Wisconsin Graziers Annual Conference

The 12th annual conference will be held at Stoney Creek Inn and Conference Center in Mosinee WI., located at the intersection of I-39 and Business 51 South near the Cedar Creek Mall on the south side of the Wausau area. Registration is from 9:30 - 9:45 am, the program is from 9:45 am - 2:30 pm. There will be several break out sessions throughout the day and lunch will be from 12:00-1:00 with whole roasted hog from Carlson Farm and Network Update. The conference registration fee is \$10 per person to cover lunch, handouts and speaker costs. Walk-in registration is \$15 per person. Make check payable to Marathon County ; mail to Marathon County CPZ, 210 River Dr., Wausau WI 54403-5449; and it must be received by March 7, 2006. If you have questions, contact Paul Daigle at 715-261-6006 or e-mail Paul at paul.daigle@mail.co.marathon.wi.us.

Growers needed for UW Phosphorus Recommendation Study

UW Extension Soil Scientist Carrie Laboski is recruiting willing potato growers to participate in an on-farm evaluation of UW phosphorus recommendations.

The objective of this study is to learn if UW recommendations for P fertilization of potato are adequate to produce maximum economic yield. Data collected in accordance to this protocol can be used to help inform UW recommendations. All data collected will be summarized and reported back to participating growers. Grower anonymity can be maintained if desired.

County Agent Alex Crockford will help producers in the Langlade County area with site selection, soil sampling, developing fertilizer treatments, plot sizing, harvest/data collection.

Plots can be any size. For growers ease, the treatments can be set up as a split field as shown in the diagram at the right. The UW P₂O₅ rate can be applied to a couple of passes in the center of the field. The grower P₂O₅ rate (normal practice) can be applied on either side of the UW rate.

"The biggest challenge, as I see it, is to get the right fertilizer blends such that the only difference between treatments is the rate of P applied in starter," said Laboski.

If you would like to participate in this study, please contact Alex Crockford at 627-6313.

School for Beginning Dairy Farmers: Call for Applicants

Prospective dairy farmers have until April 1 to apply for an innovative program, now entering its eleventh year, to help them establish their own grass-based dairy farms in Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy Farmers, a program of the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, offers qualified students the chance to attend the UW-Madison Farm and Industry Short Course, along with special training sessions and seminars in the management of grazing-based dairy farms. Students are mentored by experienced graziers and UW faculty, and on-farm internships are available.

"We're looking for bright, motivated individuals who dream of starting their own grass-based dairy business," said school coordinator Dick Cates. "This is a one-of-a-kind program that combines financial support, classroom learning, farmer- and researcher-taught seminars, internships, mentoring, and initial follow-up support to help launch successful business plans.

"Students who engage in internships, which will run for two to six months during spring and summer 2005,

live on the farms of veteran Wisconsin graziers who serve as teachers and mentors. From here, past students have followed a variety of paths, including pursuing apprenticeships, equity-building arrangements, and their own business start-ups," he says.

Applications must be received by April 1 for full scholarship consideration, and will be accepted after April 1 until the school is filled. WSBDF participants may apply for a variety of scholarships to help with tuition and internship expenses. For individuals interested in the 15-week grass-based dairy seminar only, a CD set is available for purchase (\$115; includes shipping) by contacting the WSBDF.

To register for or learn more about the WSBDF, go to www.cias.wisc.edu/dairysch.html; call (608) 265 6437 (WSBDF office) or (608) 588-2836 (Dick Cates); fax: (608) 265-3020; mail: Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy Farmers, c/o CIAS, 1450 Linden Dr., UW-Madison, Madison, WI 53706; e-mail: rlcates@wisc.edu

Hands-On Apple Pruning Clinic

Third Annual

The third annual hands-on Apple Pruning Clinic will be held on Saturday, April 8th from 9-11am at a local apple orchard in the town of Weston. Participants will learn techniques for pruning apple trees. There will be a demonstration on older tree rejuvenation techniques and how to prune a newly planted tree. Participants will also be able to see the results of pruning completed in the past two years. Bring pruning tools if you have them; participants will also learn how to sharpen and sanitize tools. Handouts will also be provided.

This program will be taught by North Central Wisconsin Master Gardeners in cooperation with the Marathon County UW-Extension.

The class is limited to 20 participants. To register send a check for \$10 per person payable to North Central Wisconsin Master Gardeners (NCWMG) and mail to Apple Pruning Clinic, Attn: L. Schmidt, 827 N. 27th Ave, Wausau, WI 54401. Upon receipt of registration, directions to the orchard will be given.



Production costs...

without impacting crop yields and hence profitability. The two largest variable costs of producing grains are fertilizers and pesticides. Therefore, focusing on these areas likely will result in the most reductions. One potential area is on phosphorus and potassium fertilizer expense. Some fields have high soil phosphorus and potassium nutrient levels such that fertilizer applications can be reduced without having much impact on yields.

Several strategies for reducing input costs will be the topic of discussion at the UW-Extension program on March 7th in Shawano (details on calendar.)

Farmers know best the ways they could improve their management of seeding expenses, fertilizers, pest control, harvest costs, crop storage, and overall land management. But here is a list of some other things that are known to reduce input costs:

- Seed winter instead of spring cereals
- Include grain legumes in the rotation - they make their own nitrogen and leave many benefits to the following crop
- Fall-seeded (or dormant seeded) oilseed crops can produce a higher yield at the same level of crop input
- Use animal manures as a partial replacement for fertilizer
- Use some tillage instead of relying exclusively on herbicides
- Operate tractors and other field equipment at optimum field speeds and wheel slippage.

MARCH (CONTINUED)

3/15-16... PDPW Annual Business Conference

National experts to address topics ranging from ways to produce greater profits to new trends in people, cows, economics, feed and finance. To be held in Exhibition Hall at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison, Wisconsin. For more info contact Julie at 800-947-7379 or visit www.pdpw.org/abc.html.

3/21... Central WI Processing Crops Meeting Hancock Ag Research Station, Hancock, WI

3/22... Pesticide Applicator Training Session

The second of two sessions for 2006 at the Langlade Cty Resource Center in Antigo. There is a \$30 registration fee, which includes the training manual. Pre-registration is required. Stop in and get a manual and register or call 627-6236 to have a brochure mailed directly to you.

3/28-30... 46th Annual WPS Farm Show

For more than four decades, the Wisconsin Public Service Farm Show has provided an opportunity for the agricultural community to check out the latest farming equipment, machinery, tools and services. The 2006 Public Service Farm Show promises to be better than ever.

3/31... CSP Sign Up Ends

Conservation Security Program (CSP) Sign-up is currently open for Lake DuBay Watershed - Langlade County producers may be eligible to enroll in a voluntary program providing substantial financial incentives for good land stewardship and conservation practices. The sign-up deadline is March 31, 2006.

**Langlade County
UW Extension**

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Potato Rotation Planning Assistance

Researchers with the USDA-ARS New England Plant, Soil, and Water Laboratory are looking at crop rotation strategies that may be a means to “diversify a farmers portfolio.” A new software program developed by ARS called Potato Systems Planner will help sort out the possibilities of alternative crop rotations based on profitability measures.

According to project leader Wayne Honeycutt, the right rotation can bring growers additional income, it also can be an effective way of suppressing potato diseases, enhancing soil nutrient content and boosting crop productivity - all while reducing use of chemicals.

I now have this program in the office and I am willing to investigate value-adding and/or cost reducing alternatives for your farm.

Please call if you have an interest and we can set up an appointment.