

Rising production costs demand fine-tuned cropping

GEORGETOWN, Del. — This year your soil test results may turn out to be your very best friend. With the drastic rise in the price of fertilizers for the 1980 cropping season, the soil test can be one of the best management tools for making a profit, says University of Delaware extension crops specialist Frank Webb.

Costs of nitrogen and phosphorus are way up this year, he reports, with nitrogen prices running somewhere between 20 and 24 cents a pound. And for the first time in the history of modern fertilizers, phosphorus costs more per pound than nitrogen — anywhere from 25 to 30 cents a pound. That is a considerable increase over 1979.

Potash has increased the least of the major fertilizer inputs, with prices still running somewhere in the neighborhood of 12 to 14 cents a pound.

When you calculate your total fertilizer investment in terms of pounds applied per acre on your corn and soybeans, you can see that what you pay for these inputs alone is going to boost your production costs way up this year. Add the increases in what you pay for fuel and pesticides and it's obvious that you're going to have to sharpen your pencil and put all you know to good use, to make a profit in 1980.

The soil test is one farming tool that can be used with a fair amount of confidence today, says Webb.

Both research and extension demonstrations at the University of Delaware show that with the high level of phosphorus and potash in many Delaware soils, it's often possible to reduce — or even eliminate — applications of these materials in some fields.

So take a close look at your soil test results, rather than

making routine applications of these nutrients. If you already have adequate fertility, this may be the time to use some of it.

Of course, where soil test analysis reveals that levels are low, you will need to apply phosphorus and potash at recommended rates. In spite of the rise in fertilizer costs today, remember these nutrients are still probably one of the best buys around, when it comes to making a profit on a crop.

If you need any help in determining fertilizer rates for your crops this year, contact your county agricultural agent, Webb suggests. Just remember that in order to fine tune

your fertilizer program you need good soil test results. Ideally you should have your soil analyzed each year.

There are other ways to economize on corn, soybean and small grain production. Take your weed control program. With the rising cost of herbicides, it pays to take extra care in their application. Also, price out the different materials available. You may find that a number of different ones will do the same job as far as broadleaf weed or grass control are concerned. But they may not all be priced competitively.

What you're looking for are effective materials that will do a good job at the

cheapest price. This is the best way to optimize the return on your investment.

One other area which needs close scrutiny if you're trying to pare down your production costs is fuel use. There's not much we can do about fuel prices, says Webb. But we can organize our tillage operations and consolidate some travel over our fields. In some areas there's certainly the option of going no-till.

No-tillage can result in considerable fuel economy — especially on corn. The savings from this cultural practice have been well demonstrated over the last six to eight years in Delaware.

The program is well described in the extension publication, "Recipe for No-Tillage Corn Production." This is available free from extension offices in Newark, 302/738-2506; Dover 302/678-4675; and Georgetown 302/856-5250.

No-tillage also works well for double-cropped soybeans after grain. But as in the case of no-till corn, certain procedures must be carefully followed in order to get the weed control and good crop stands that will result in a good yield.

If you need help in setting up a no-till program on your farm, check with your county agent on this matter, too.

PMMB to suspend tolling enforcement

HARRISBURG — At a public meeting held Friday, April 11, the Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board voted to suspend the enforcement of the Board's tolling regulation, Regulation 141.4.

According to PMMB Executive Secretary Earl B. Fink, Jr., the move was taken pending the outcome of litigation with Dairy Lea Cooperative, et al, presently before the Commonwealth Court.

Lehigh Valley Farms, on February 13, 1980 had charged Dairy Lea with illegal tolling of milk.

The charges stem from an

arrangement between A&P and Dairy Lea on the processing and packaging of milk from Dairy Lea's Scranton plant at a price Lehigh charged is below the cost of production.

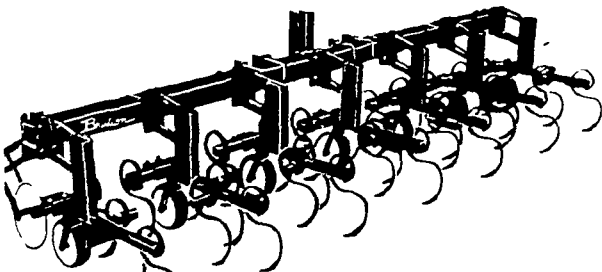
Dairy Lea has denied the charges and said they were within full compliance with PMMB regulations.



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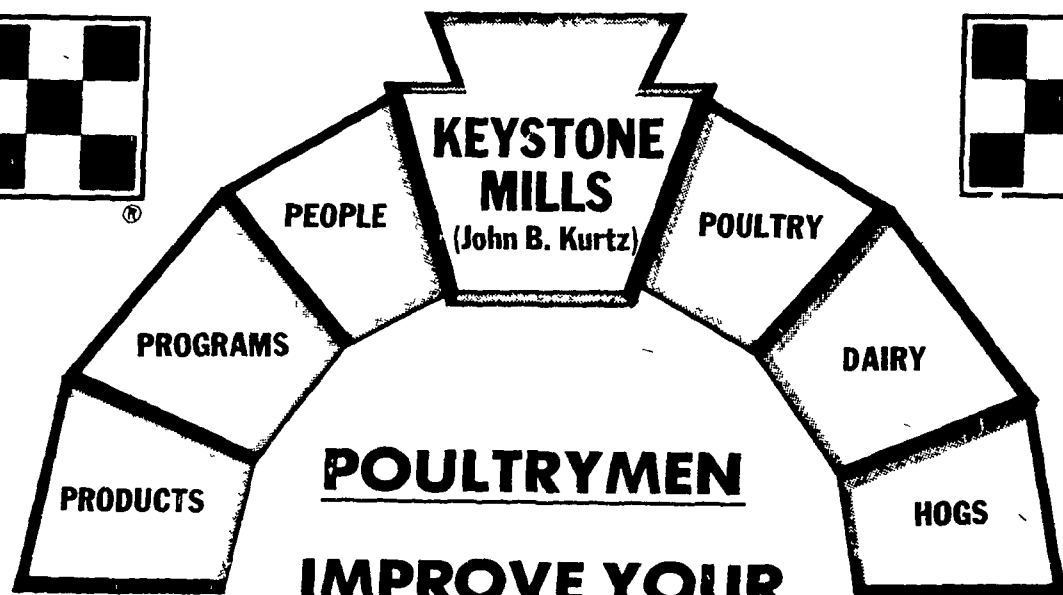
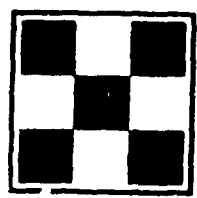
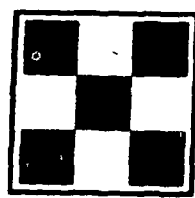


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