

Erosion control practices conserve water

HARRISBURG — The lack of rainfall in 1980 and the forecast by many of another dry year in 1981 could lead to economic problems for numerous Dauphin County farmers, according to Joel Myers of the Dauphin County office of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service.

Myers explained water conservation as it relates to crop production could have a significant effect on crop yields in 1981.

Conservation practices such as stripcropping, contour farming,

terraces, diversions, the use of crop residues, cover cropping and conservation tillage have long been recognized as measures to reduce soil erosion.

But, added Myers, these very same measures can have a significant effect on maximizing crop production in years of little rainfall. These conservation practices conserve water by reducing runoff and erosion and allowing more moisture to in-

filtrate the soil, he said.

Practices such as stripcropping and contour farming utilize each plant row as a miniature diversion or channel to retain water and allow infiltration. Diversions and terraces when constructed on gentle grades permit additional infiltration and reduce runoff except during periods of very heavy rainfall. Maximum retention and infiltration of water is achieved by using the tile outlet

storage terraces which are becoming more popular each year. These terraces are designed to store water for up to 40 hours to increase infiltration.

The uses of crop residues, cover cropping and conservation tillage provide mulching by leaving a layer of organic material on the soil surface. Myers explained the organic build-up acts as a blanket to protect the soil from the impact of raindrops. He added the organic layer also serves as a mulch to reduce moisture loss from the soil through evaporation.

Myers indicated the use of conservation tillage includes the use of minimum tillage such as chisel plows, disks or other equipment as well as no-till

planting. He stated the benefits from minimum tillage are a direct result of the amount of residue left on the surface at planting time.

In order for minimum tillage to be most effective, 60-75 percent or more of the residue should remain on the surface. This can only be achieved by reducing the number of trips over the field and by properly adjusting the ground speed of the unit.

For over 40 years numerous conservation measures have proven themselves by saving our top soil," Myers concluded. "Now during a period when moisture conditions are low these same measures can help us conserve water for maximum crop production."

1981 honey program open for comment

LANCASTER — The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture is considering a price support program for the 1981 crop of honey.

Honey is presently being supported through loans and purchase agreements at 50.3 cents per pound which is 60% of parity. The public is being asked to advise the Secretary whether there should be

(1) any modifications in the present program;

(2) any change in the parity relationship in the price support level.

Americans consume between 250 million and 275 million pounds of honey annually. Honey production averaged 250 million pounds during peak production years, 1960-1964. Average production during the last 10 years was 208 million pounds. This resulted in the U.S. becoming a net importer of

honey. The most important aspect is the pollination service provided by the honeybee.

The price support program for beekeepers provides price and income stability to producers and helps maintain domestic honey production and enhance quality of many food items in the U.S. diet. Stable or increased production also helps the Nation's balance of payments position.

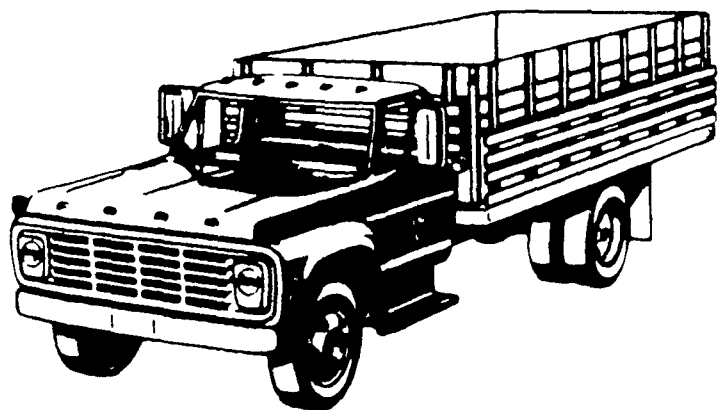
Persons interested in this issue should send written comments to J. Wells, Director, Production Adjustment Division, USDA-ASCS, Room 3630-S, P.O. Box 2415,

Washington, D.C. 20013, phone 202/447-7951. Comments must be received by March 16, 1981.



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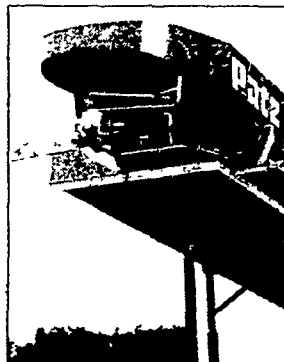
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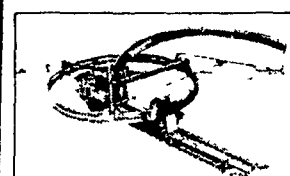
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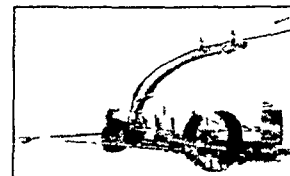
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