

## Great Plains Conservation Program hits quarter-century mark

STREETER, N.D. — Soil conservation leaders gathered at a North Dakota research station recently to mark the 25th anniversary of the law that authorized the Great Plains Conservation Program.

Since 1957, the program has brought wind and water erosion control to more than 110 million acres in 10 states stretching from Wyoming to Texas.

Norman A. Berg, chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service, said in Washington that North Dakota rancher Berthold Sackman and the soil conservation agency signed the initial contract in December 1957.

The ceremonies honored Sackman and other Great Plains "pioneers" at the Central

Grasslands Research Station, formerly the Sackman Ranch, where that first contract was signed.

"It was clear in the mid-1950's that we had made progress in reducing erosion since the Dust Bowl," Berg said. The program was created in 1956 during a period of severe drought and dust storms reminiscent of the Dust Bowl years of the 1930's.

"But it also was clear that farmers and ranchers would need longer-term assistance if we were to make truly significant gains in conserving our Great Plains soils," Berg said.

The Great Plains Conservation Program called for contracts providing technical and financial assistance over periods of from 3 to 10 years.

Since the program's inception, Great Plains farmers and ranchers have signed more than 58,000 contracts in the USDA program covering more than 110 million acres. With SCS assistance, and in cooperation with local conservation districts, they have established more than 5 million acres of permanent vegetative cover, planted 64,000 acres of windbreaks and installed 13,000 miles of livestock water pipelines.

Last year, nearly 1,000 farmers and ranchers signed long-term contracts to apply permanent conservation measures on 2.5 million acres.

The program is available to farmers and ranchers in 58 counties in the Great Plains states of Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North

Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas and Wyoming.

Besides helping to control wind erosion, the program helps farmers and ranchers reduce erosion from water and conserve water supplies. In most Great Plains counties, land owners and operators can receive cost-sharing help with 33 different conservation practices.

This program is coordinated with other federal, state and local governmental agencies through state and county committees. It is intended to be an addition to, not a substitute for, other programs available in the Great Plains states.

In 1980, Congress extended the Great Plains Conservation Program to September 30, 1991.

## Consider converting corn to silage

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — With prospects of another big U.S. corn harvest close at hand and a continuation of depressed grain market prices, this is a year when dairy and livestock farmers ought to convert a sizable portion of their cornfields into silage, says John W. Wysong, Extension farm management specialist and professor of agricultural economics at the University of Maryland in College Park.

Wysong advises filling all existing silos to capacity, using temporary silos and refilling soils which are emptied by mid-

October.

He notes that corn yields more feed value per acre as silage than as grain. And it saves energy because artificial drying is not required for on-the-farm storage.

Dairy producers, especially, should consider feeding more silage and less grain during the coming months, the Maryland Extension specialist comments. He predicted that wholesale milk prices probably will be leveling off during the next year as the federal government reduces commitments to the price support program.

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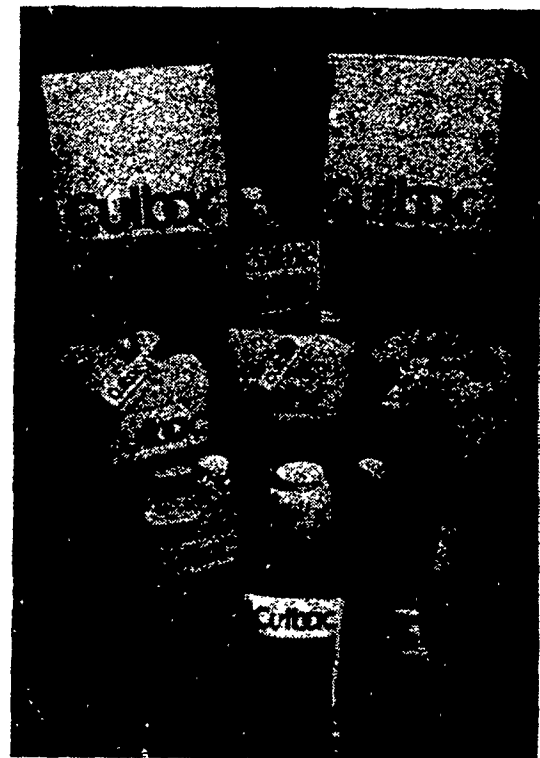
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