

Grain industry benefits

OUR READERS WRITE

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Further, you have to assume that he is willing to accept a very modest return on his savings, with a payback period of many years. The only motivation for using soil conservation practices today (e.g. forages and beef instead of continuous corn up and down the hill) is the feeling of satisfaction that comes from knowing you are doing the right thing.

Soil conservation is a kind of saving. That is, the farmer accepts a lower spendable income today in the hope of a greater income in the years to come.

Our economy has been biased against saving for many years. Just look at what has happened to investors in 5 percent savings accounts.

Farmland has become a speculative plaything for doctors and dentists. Why make a long-term and not-very-lucrative investment in productivity if you are planning to sell off lots on the road frontage in a few years?

I wish we could solve the problem in a way consistent with the farmer's freedom to farm his own way and make his own choices. With low inflation and stable prices, farmland would lose its attraction as an inflation hedge. The value of a long-term investment in productivity could be assessed more accurately and would be more attractive. The same would be true for industrial corporations — General Motors and so on.

Unfortunately, I am afraid we are going to solve the problem with regulations instead of incentives. Certain practices, such as fall plowing after soybeans, will

simply be forbidden. Farmers will have to submit proposed cropping schemes in triplicate to a Land Inspector, just as a builder must have new construction approved by a Building Inspector.

Farmers will have to contend with all the nuisance, red tape and waste of time that builders have to put up with. City people, who outvote the farmers many times over in this area, would support this because they are used to the regulatory approach to solving problems.

The federal government has tended to focus on engineering structure rather than cropping schemes. Examples are terraces, drain tile and dams. But much of soil conservation can be summed up in one phrase: grow grass.

If there is forest on the mountains and grass on the slopes, you won't need a dam. And, if sloping ground is not planted in grass, the dam won't work anyway because of siltation. So we should focus on ways to make it profitable for farmers to grow grass — or at least more grass than they are growing now.

Dairy price supports have this effect up to a point, but only to the extent that the dairyman is feeding hay rather than silage corn and grain. Price supports for corn tend to expand the acreage in this crop — surely this is not what we want.

It is well-known that there is very little erosion from acreage planted in pasture or meadow. Where it is profitable to grow grass, the soil conservation problem will solve itself.

David Hamilton
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When two sports teams play each other, an impartial, independent official is present to administer a pre-determined uniform set of rules. When two parties contest an issue in court, an impartial, independent judge is present to administer a uniform set of laws. When contestants enter a state fair, impartial, independent judges grade the entries under a uniform set of standards.

Much the same situation prevails when grain is bought and sold. Both the buyer and seller are more confident they are getting a fair deal when the quality of that grain is determined by impartial, independent inspectors under a pre-determined uniform set of grade standards.

This nationwide, uniform set of grain standards, known to all in advance of the transaction and subject to official appeals, is what I refer to when I describe service to the grain industry as one of the major functions of the Federal Grain Inspection Service.

Under the new thrust of this administration, and with the concurrence of the Congress, the Federal Grain Inspection Service has been operating under a shift in emphasis since Oct. 1. While fees for grain inspection services were charged before, they have now been increased to reflect more accurately the costs of providing those services.

The user fee concept is not new — it has existed for many services provided by the government. And in the past year, many other agencies have either adopted user fees for the first time or increased existing fees to defray the costs of operation.

In the Federal Grain Inspection Service, we recognized that increased fees would have an impact on grain transactions, and that there had been complaints that

costs were higher than necessary to provide the services.

The agency had grown rapidly since enactment of the U.S. Grain Standards Act in 1976 to enable it to administer the added responsibilities mandated by the legislation. But early in 1981 we recognized that the agency was ready to enter its second phase — that the experience of the first five years had been assimilated and we were ready to begin continuous operation under a leaner and more efficient structure.

And I mean leaner. When we learned we would be asked to obtain about 90 percent of our operating funds from the users of our service — instead of the 60 percent in past years — we moved to reduce our staff in Washington and the field by about 25 percent. We removed a layer of management by closing our five regional offices and we restructured the whole agency so that the field offices now report directly to one person in Washington.

It must be clearly understood, however, that the reduction in staff will not result in a lack of adequate staff, a decrease in prompt responses or a weakening of the integrity of the system. It will mean that the staff will be leaner and taking proper care of work local peaks will require more advanced planning and scheduling.

In addition to the efficiencies gained from a smaller, better organized staff, we are also reviewing existing procedures to see where they can be improved, and examining proposed procedures more closely before they are issued.

We will be delegating to the private and state agencies more responsibility to supervise their own employees and to ensure the quality of the service they provide.

This will result in more decision-making at the local level while holding down costs users must pay for supervision.

We have been told that despite these cost-cutting measures, the new user fees will result in a decrease in demand for official services. Because the new fees have been in effect only since Oct. 1, it is too early to estimate the actual impact they will have. But some grain firms have already indicated to us they will shift to unofficial services, and some have

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Now is the Time

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accurate records of all treatments. In cases where excess tolerances are found, it might save time and money.

To Store Firewood Outside

We are more energy conscious than we've ever been — this is certainly a good trend. Most homes are equipped with a real energy saver — the fireplace. A lot of people will be using their fireplace more than ever before so they'll be using more firewood. Proper storage is important.

When storing your firewood, keep it outside the house — insects many hibernate in the wood piles. If you keep in inside, they'll think it's spring and wake-up, come out and be a pest in your home. If this happens, use an ant and roach aerosol for control. It is a lot easier just to keep the firewood in a cool garage or some outside shelter. The important thing is to keep it dry, even if it means covering it with a plastic tarp. Wet firewood takes a lot of heat just to dry it out.

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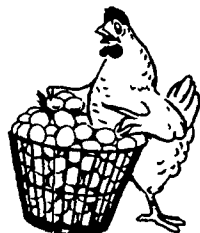


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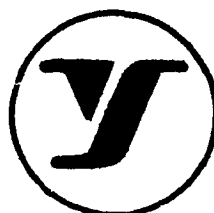
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