

## USDA boosts tobacco fund contribution by 25 cents

WASHINGTON — Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block today announced that, as a condition of price support eligibility for the 1985 flue-cured tobacco crop, producers must contribute 25 cents per pound to a no net cost fund.

The Secretary also said the support level on the 1985 crop will be \$1.699 per pound, the same as the 1982-84 support levels.

The Flue-Cured Tobacco Cooperative Stabilization Corporation recommended the 25-cent contribution, Block said. The contributions are intended to ensure that the tobacco support program will be operated at no net cost to taxpayers in conformity with the No Net Cost Tobacco Program Act of 1982.

The 25-cent contribution is an increase of 18 cents over last year. The increase is necessary, Block said, to cover projected losses on the 1982 through 1985 crops. By Jan. 1, 1985, the Flue-Cured Cooperative Stabilization Cor-

poration held the largest inventory since 1965. Nearly one-fourth of 1982-84 producer marketings went into the association's inventory, and sales of the tobacco have been minimal. The amount of the contribution will be re-evaluated if legislative changes are made which will substantially reduce the projected losses, Secretary Block said.

The Agricultural Act of 1949 provides that the 1985 flue-cured tobacco crop be supported at the same level at which the 1982 crop was supported if the basic support level increases by no more than 5 percent from the 1984 level as determined by the regular statutory formula. Since the 1985 basic support level is only 2.8 percent higher than the computed level of support for the 1984 crop, the level of support of \$1.699 per pound that was applicable for the 1982 crop is also applicable for the 1985 crop.

Block said grade loan rates will

be announced later

Producers who market 1985 crop flue-cured tobacco that is ineligible for price support because they have not agreed to contribute to the fund will be subject to the same penalty that applies to the marketing of excess tobacco, Block said. The penalty equals 75 percent of the previous year's average market price.

Price support programs for tobacco are administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service through loans to producer associations.



## Sulfur deficiency

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averages 70-bushel wheat, 51-bushel soybeans, 95-bushel barley and 165-bushel corn. His stands of pure alfalfa have yielded up to 8 tons per acre with a crude protein of 22-24 percent.

Roy Kurtz, who has been selling fertilizer for Reading Bone for 25 years, thinks the popularity of high-analysis N-P-K fertilizers over the past decade has created a sulfur shortage in some soils.

Unlike ammonium sulfate and ordinary superphosphate (0-20-0-12S), which contain significant amounts of incidental sulfur, high-analysis materials such as urea, ammonium nitrate, N solutions and triple superphosphate do not contain any sulfur, he explains.

"Before these fertilizers came along, farmers routinely applied sulfur to their fields — perhaps without realizing it," he says. "When they stopped using materials like ammonium sulfate,

they unintentionally omitted sulfur from their fertilizer programs. Now, I think, it's beginning to catch up with them."

According to a report by The Sulphur Institute, an international trade group based in Washington, D.C., the first crop response to sulfur fertilizer in the United States was recorded right here in Pennsylvania by one of the state's most famous citizens — Benjamin Franklin.

The story goes that Franklin took some gypsum, which contains about 15 units of sulfur, and wrote, "This land has been plastered," on a hillside near Philadelphia. His inscription "greened up" within a few days and was visible to passers-by.

The Sulphur Institute says at least 35 states have reported crop responses to applied sulfur, nearly a three-fold increase since 1960. The Institute cites high-analysis N-P-K fertilizers, more intensive land use, and cleaner air resulting from pollution-control regulations enacted in the early 1970s as the primary reasons for the trend.

So why do crops need sulfur in the first place?

Like N, P and K, sulfur is one of 16 basic elements needed to support plant and animal life. More specifically, sulfur aids protein and chlorophyll formation.

"Without adequate sulfur, a crop cannot be expected to reach its full potential in terms of yield, quality or protein content," Hemphill claims. "That doesn't mean all crops need sulfur fertilizer. But farmers should learn to keep tabs on the sulfur status of their soils."

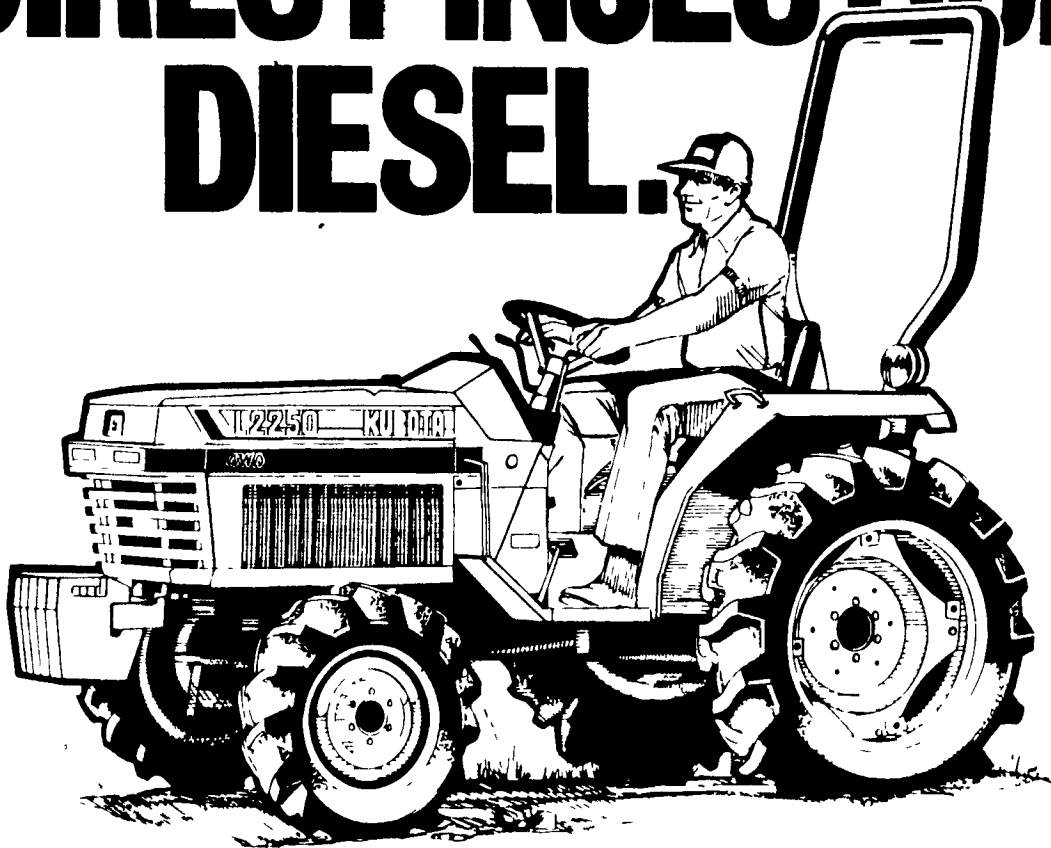
Sulfur-deficiency symptoms vary from crop to crop, though there are a few general signs. Plants tend to be small and spindly with short, slender stalks. Growth rate is retarded and maturity is often delayed, particularly with cereal grains. On most plants, young leaves turn light green to yellowish in color, with even lighter colored veins. Nitrogen-deficiency symptoms are similar, but yellowing from an N shortage usually begins on the lower, older leaves instead.

Soil and plant-tissue tests provide a general indication of sulfur needs, says Hemphill. But not all ag labs in the Northeast — including Penn State's — are geared up to run sulfur tests, he cautions. "And if they are, a special request must be made," he says.

Hemphill thinks home test plots are the truest indicator of sulfur needs. Applying one pound of sulfur for every five to 10 pounds of nitrogen is generally recommended.

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