



Farm Talk

by
Jerry Webb

Using your time wisely

What's a farmer's time worth? That's the question raised by a group of economists at Purdue University. They went about answering the question in a convincing, even amazing way. For instance, an hour gained at the right time might be worth as much as \$300.

To figure this, the economists developed a computer model to

look into more than 800 combinations of planting dates, harvesting dates, tillage methods, machinery sizes, soil types, technology packages, land rental, irrigation options, weather data and whatever else affects farm output.

The computer was programmed for a 1000 acre corn operation and optimum planting dates between

April 25th and May 10th.

Computers don't give simple answers, so it's difficult to re-tell what it uncovered in the space available here. It did point to combinations of equipment and labor that would help a farmer get his corn planted at the best time, and handle the maximum number of acres. The economists were able to point to the bottlenecks and tell where an extra hour of effort would be worth \$100—or in some instances much more.

What advice did the computer give? Boiled down to farmer language, it said:

- Do every job possible outside of the critical planting period—spreading fertilizer, preparing a seedbed, etc.

- Use large equipment to cover maximum acres in minimum time.

- Hire the extra labor needed to use expensive power and equipment to best advantage.

- Work longer hours during the critical period.

- Switch to a tillage system that takes less time per acre during critical time period.

- Hire some jobs done on a custom basis.

One thing for sure for corn and soybean farmers, there are a few

very high paying days during planting and harvesting when things just have to go right. A one day delay, especially at planting, could cost hundreds of dollars.

This leads to a very important problem that the computer isn't able to deal with—the state of mind and body of that farmer during those critical days.

What if he's sick for a couple of days, or worried about being overdrawn at the bank, or there's an ill-tempered creditor hounding him or a thoughtless neighbor or city dweller calling him up at night to discuss some non-essential problem.

Or maybe his wife is bugging him to cut the grass or plow the garden or plant the mailbox or take her out to dinner. And the kids are in a play at school, and 4-H meets tomorrow night and Johnny needs help with his project report.

There are a thousand and one problems that a farmer faces and solves each day as he manages his business. But there are times—especially planting and har-

vesting—when everyone who has a stake in the success of that farm or the well-being of that farmer and his family needs to swallow those unnecessary bothers that keep a farmer away from the business at hand.

A little patience and understanding, a hot meal whenever he wants it, an avoided confrontation over any of a hundred little things that are part of farm life will help this man focus on the job that must be done.

Maybe this is one of the traps that a farmer can't avoid. His home is his business. He can't go off to work. It's like the artist or writer who works at home and so often gets nothing done because of the interruptions from family, friends, salesmen, and all the other door knockers and problem-bringers.

But through awareness maybe a family, even a community, can be trained to respect these periods of deep concentration and devotion to the job.

It could be money in the bank.

Forwood testifies before U.S. House ag committee

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Earl R. Forwood, president of Eastern Milk Producers Cooperative Association, Inc., joined prominent agriculture leaders Friday, May 17, in testifying before the United States House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture.

The Committee was in Syracuse to hold a public hearing on the 1985 Farm Bill.

Forwood urged the committee, chaired by Representative E. "Kika" de la Garza, to support the dairy industry by implementing a dairy plan based on the recommendations made by the National

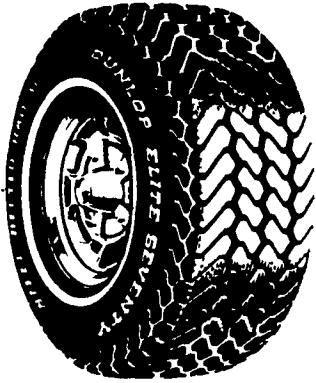
Milk Producers Federation.

The Federation's plan includes the continuation of the dairy price support program, the use of a dairy specific pricing index and the implementation of a supply-demand adjuster to the prices generated by the price index.

"We hope these recommendations will be helpful as you forge the dairy provisions of the 1985 farm bill," said Forwood.

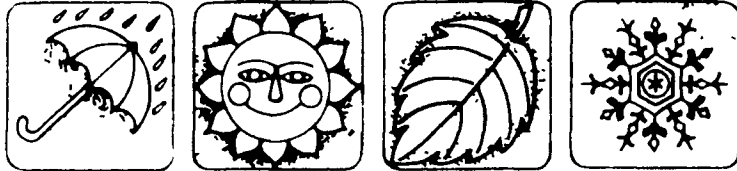
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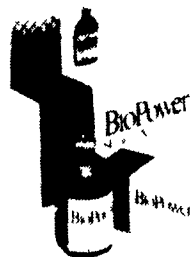


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