

Agway Vegetable Day Highlights Plastic Culture

BY JACK HUBLEY

MANHEIM — For years vegetable growers have been getting the jump on the seasons and controlling weeds with plastic mulch and row covers. And for years researchers have been trying to minimize the fuss involved in disposing of the stuff after it outlives its usefulness.

One of the most attractive concepts to come out of all this brainstorming has been the idea of a degradable plastic: use it once and it simply disappears.

Agway's research specialist, Janet Fallon, was on hand to report the latest developments in degradable plastics at the company's annual vegetable day held at Kreider Dairy Farms Restaurant in Manheim on Nov. 19.

Sponsored by Salunga Agway and G&G Feeds of Manheim, the event also featured presentations by representatives of Stauffer Chemical, DuPont and CIBA-GEIGY.

Since Agway began testing degradable plastics in 1983, the company has come up with little of practical value to farmers, Fallon reported. One product that failed to live up to the manufacturer's claims when tested was a biodegradable latex spray-on mulch that resembles blue-black paint, said the researcher. While the product has potential, said Fallon, it proved to be miserable to work with, drying prematurely and clogging the spray nozzles.

Recently, though, a new generation of photodegradable plastics has arrived on the scene from Israel, Fallon said. When the necessary threshold of sunlight is reached, the material begins to break down into small pieces that crumble and do not blow away before they disintegrate. "We're really excited about this one," said Fallon, adding that the material reportedly breaks down in soil, as well.

While the use of plastic row covers and mulch is comparatively labor intensive, Fallon emphasized that some systems are indeed cost effective. To support her statement, the researcher reviewed some of Agway's sweetcorn research conducted at the company's farm research center in Tully, N.Y.

In the Agway project, corn was planted in furrows that allowed the plants to grow six to eight inches before coming in contact with the plastic covers. "So basically, the plastic forms a miniature greenhouse," she said.

The data showed that corn planted two to four weeks earlier than normal under plastic was harvested two weeks earlier than corn planted at the same time on bare soil and 28 days earlier than corn planted at normal planting time on bare soil.

Using this latter group as a control, Agway found that yields were 36 percent higher in plots planted early under mulch. Those planted early on bare soil yielded only 4 percent more crop than the conventionally planted corn in the control group.

Although the differences in earliness and crop yields are less dramatic in years when spring is warm and wet, "the net return is favorable to (plastic) mulch in most years," Fallon said.

Temperatures beneath the plastic mulch should not exceed 120°, said Fallon. While the use of slit plastic will eliminate the possibility of overheating, "you lose about one-half of the heat advantage," said the researcher. "I'd opt to go with the solid plastic."

Fallon also pointed out that herbicides are an important tool in plastic culture, since the plastic spurs weed as well as crop growth. Lasso and atrazine are both labeled for use under plastic she said.

Ridomil for vegetables

Ridomil is a household word among tobacco farmers who look to the fungicide for blue mold control. According to CIBA-GEIGY sales representative Ruth Ann Hickman, Ridomil has recently been labeled for use on many vegetables, as well.

At Agway's meeting, Hickman told growers that the fungicide is particularly effective in controlling pythium (seed rot) and phytophthora (root rot) in tomatoes.

In tests conducted at Hess Farms in Marietta last summer, tomato plants transplanted into Ridomil-treated areas looked noticeably healthier with two days, Hickman reported.

She noted that Ridomil proved to be surprisingly effective in controlling the buckeye rot that became prevalent during rainy periods this summer. While buckeye rot reduced tomato yields to five tons per acre in untreated fields, areas treated with Ridomil were able to produce 30 tons per acre. "We didn't expect to see that big a difference," she said.

Also featured during the meeting was Agway's vegetable seed specialist, Jeff Johnson, who introduced growers to some new vegetable varieties.



Principle speakers at Agway's Vegetable Day included regional seed specialist Jeff Johnson and Agway research specialist Janet Fallon.



Farm Credit Offers Financial Management Services

HUNT VALLEY, Md. — Many Pennsylvania farmers think of their local Farm Credit Service offices as a reliable source of credit geared to the unique needs of agricultural producers. But now, more farm families are going to Farm Credit to take advantage of the array of closely related financial services they also have to offer.

The newest entry among this variety of financial programs comes under the umbrella term of "financial management services." Combining their inherent knowledge of financial matters and farming know how, Farm Credit has developed a package of comprehensive farm record keeping options and fast and accurate tax preparation services. These particular services are available to non-borrowers as well. "Nearly 600 Pennsylvania farm families are already employing one of our record keeping plans," said Bobby Jones of the Farm Credit Service of Pennsylvania, "and over 1,000 have taken advantage of our tax preparation service."

Keeping Better Records

Three flexible record keeping options are available from Farm Credit in the financial management services program. For farm families who currently use or plan to use a computer, they offer their "AGRIFAX-ON-FARM" software package. This program provides farmers with a record keeping and management information system customized to their individual operations. It provides management and financial reports, cash flow planning, check printing, enterprise analysis, and comparative business analysis reports to help make those important management decisions to increase efficiency and profit.

For farm families who are interested in the advantages of computerized records but don't own a computer, AGRIFAX-Mail-in-Service is available. This program offers the same report and analysis services as the ON-FARM program, except that the farmer keeps records manually with his check book and mails in the information at the end of each month. Farm Credit then

processes it on their computers and returns the reports.

The last and most basic option is **MANUAL ACCOUNTING SERVICE**. This includes a specially designed record book that farmers use to keep records for themselves. Like the others, this option can provide much of the vital information necessary to make informed management decisions.

Although different, all of these record keeping options may include on-farm visits by a Farm Credit specialist to assist farm families in getting the most out of each service.

Tax Service

A tax planning and preparation option is the other major part of the farm management services package. Using the comprehensive records produced by the AGRIFAX systems or using the farmer's own record keeping system, an experienced Farm Credit tax specialist can help assure farm families that they will have an accurate tax liability while meeting all reporting requirements. In addition, planning for future tax-related activities is also available. All services are available in a timely, accurate, and above all, confidential manner.

"Good record keeping is a basic need of successful, profit-oriented agriculture," said Bobby Jones, "and tax preparation is a natural

extension of those records. So providing farmers with service packages addressing these two areas is something we feel very comfortable and confident in offering. And the combination of the two may spell higher profits at year end." In addition to these farm management services, Farm Credit still offers its financially related program of Credit Life Insurance.

Life Insurance

With Credit Life Insurance a family is guaranteed that the outstanding balance of loans will be paid in full and that any excess coverage will go to the survivor in the event of the death of the borrower. This can be very important. The personal loss itself is enough without the potential financial stress imposed on a family by estate taxes and other expenses.

With all these financial management services, the Farm Credit Service of Pennsylvania has a lot more to offer than just agricultural loans. And today, profitable farming depends just as much on how farmers manage their finances as how they manage their crops and livestock. So it makes sense for Pennsylvania farm families to check out the financial management services and the insurance program available through their local Farm Credit Service offices.

Fisher & Thompson
Names Winners

Fisher & Thompson, Inc.
127 N. Main St.
LEOLA, PA.

Rich Thompson, (left) co-owner of Fisher & Thompson, Inc., passes the keys to the Yamaha 200cc 4-wheeler pictured to Mr. and Mrs. Leroy Lowe of Pylesville, Md. Lowes were the lucky grand prize winners during the Leola-based dairy equipment dealer's open house on Nov. 13-14.

Racal Offers Air Filter

FREDERICK, Md. — Racal Airstream, Inc., manufacturer of innovative personal protection systems for the agricultural market, announces the introduction of AGFLOW. This unique new respiratory protection system has been designed specifically for the agricultural worker, offering economical protection against dusts, spores and molds while delivering a continuous stream of cool, clean air.

AGFLOW is powered by a

rechargeable battery pack which draws contaminated air through the Air Filter Unit and then delivers cool clean air to the breathing zone. The lightweight, disposable Tyvek headcover can be worn for long periods of time without fatigue and provides eye and face protection.

For additional information contact: Greg Stalnaker, Racal Airstream, Inc., 7309A Grove Road, Frederick, Maryland 21701, 1-800-682-9500

Farm
Credit
News

The Farm Credit System

Yetter Offers Planter Brochure

PEORIA, Ill. — Yetter Mfg. Co., Colchester, Ill. has recently published an updated version of its 6000 Series Row Crop Planter Units designed to offer new life for IH 400 and 500 series planters.

The units are easily mounted and consist of adapter brackets, planting units, double disc openers, seed drop tubes and

closing wheels. Depth is adjusted by a single lever. Optional equipment includes Trash Masters, heavy duty conservation coulters and insecticide drives.

Copies of the new literature are available at Yetter dealers or by writing Yetter Mfg. Co., Colchester, Ill. 62326-0358.