

Wheat Growers Seek Participants For MEY Program

WASHINGTON — With wheat exports and domestic prices down, and acreage reductions in effect, growers need to do everything they can to boost profit margins. The question is: "How do you boost profits and yields beyond what you've been getting on that land for years and years?"

Harry Howard, president of the National Association of Wheat Growers Foundation, who farms 1,000 acres of wheat and barley near Warren, Minn., is looking to increase his yields 10 to 20 percent and also increase his net profit by shooting for Maximum Economic Yield (MEY), at least on 20 acres he's set aside for testing.

"MEY requires adoption of an Intensive Cereal Management (ICM) program," Howard says. "Basically, it means careful, thoughtful analysis of all inputs and their relationships, and following a seven-step production and management system."

According to Howard, integration of the system's inputs—seed variety selection, populations and spacing; fertility; pest control; moisture and irrigation, and a plant-growth regulator -- is the key to its success, as well as some help from Mother Nature.

"Most wheat producers use at least a portion of the program practices in their cropping operations,"

Howard says. "They just haven't put them together in an intensive management program before."

Howard will participate in the NAWG Foundation's 'Test 20' program this year. He'll set aside 20 acres of wheat ground and use Intensive Cereal Management to achieve MEY, the most high-quality wheat at the least cost. Used across a whole farm, the result should be improved overall farm profit, he states.

Adopting a new crop-production system isn't for the lazy, says Howard. "It's easier to go along doing what you've been doing," he says. "That's especially true when you're up against plant-

ing time. MEY requires more management and fine tuning of the whole production operation. Fortunately, the NAWG Foundation's 'Test 20' program gives a grower the opportunity to learn the system before he applies it to his total operation."

Growers who are interested in trying for MEY can register for the 'Test 20' program through the NAWG Foundation. To implement the system on 20 acres, they receive an MEY packet, containing background information, instruction manuals, guidelines and rules.

"The NAWG Foundation wants to enroll 2,000 wheat growers in 'Test 20' to build an MEY data base that can be shared with participating growers and also used to

further improve the system," Howard explains. "The grower will receive an analysis of his own operation, as well as state and national summaries of 'Test 20' results."

The 'Test 20' data allows wheat producers all over the country, who raise the five classes of wheat in different soils, climates and conditions, to help themselves and create regional guidelines.

The important thing now, according to Howard, is for growers to sign up in the 'Test 20' program. The deadline for fall-planted wheat is November 1. "We need those 2,000 growers in the program to make sure we have enough test plots to build that data base," he says.

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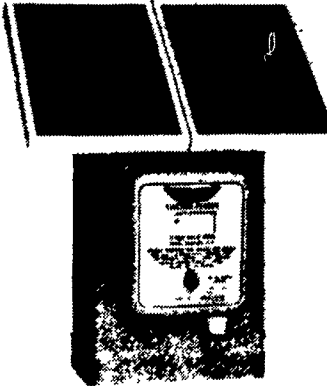
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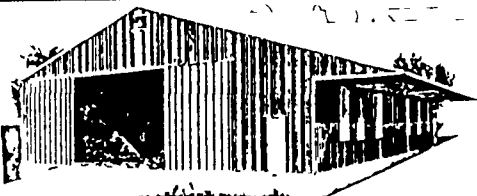
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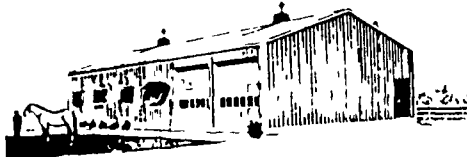
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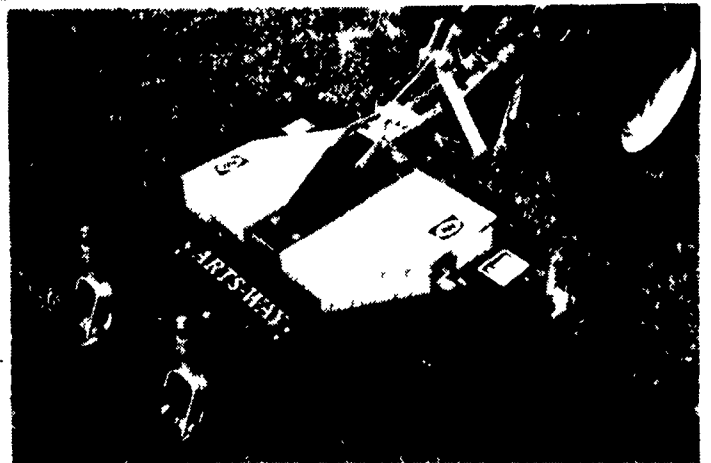
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