



OPINION

Mixed Signals

Achieving the goals of environmental protection and continued agricultural productivity and profitability will require a significant review of current agricultural and environmental policies, according to a report issued recently by the University of Minnesota.

The report, "Agricultural Competitiveness, Farm Fertilizer and Chemical Use, and Environmental Quality," was published by the University of Minnesota's Center for International Food and Agricultural Policy. It examines the factors that influence farm-management practices and input use.

Increased attention to the effects of agricultural practices on environmental quality is ushering in a new era of environmental laws affecting agricultural practices, but these new requirements frequently appear to be at odds with existing farm programs and policies, researchers said.

After reviewing today's agricultural and environmental issues, the report concludes that "improved environmental quality need not be opposed to economic competitiveness."

According to the study, as reported in the February issue of Cargill Bulletin, attempts to address the environmental and agricultural issues often become polarized around two claims. One, continued farm fertilizer and chemical use will be "environmentally catastrophic. Or two, total elimination of input use would be "economically disastrous."

The researchers believe that neither claim is realistic nor likely to occur. Authors C. Ford Runge, Robert D. Munson, Ed Lotterman and Jared Creason argue that "reducing the adverse effects of farming on the environment need not be opposed to economic competitiveness."

They suggest that the on-going development of more beneficial and efficient agricultural chemicals will reduce the adverse environmental effects caused by agriculture. Their report attempts to lay the groundwork for better understanding of alternative public policies and private practices that can maintain the farmer's productive edge while improving environmental quality.

Often, farmers need to respond to conflicting signals from the market place, government policies and environmental regulations.

"The key to maintaining a competitive agricultural sector, while also minimizing negative environmental impacts, is finding the right balance among these signals," the report said.

Because crop production is filled with uncertainties and risk, government programs have evolved to support the price of basic farm commodities. The study points out that the unfortunate side effects of conflicting policies include specialization in subsidized crops, incentives to boost yields and the acres planted to those crops, often at the expense of crop rotation and soil conservation. Tax incentives have encouraged investments in production methods that intensify chemical and other input use.

The decision to use fertilizers and chemical inputs, the report states, includes the weighing and choosing among a variety of factors, including market prices, government subsidies, tax incentives, environmental regulations, fertilizer and chemical marketing and public-sector research recommendations.

The report concludes that changing agricultural policy to send a clearer set of signals would not, in itself, solve all the environmental problems affecting agriculture, but it would eliminate confusion and remove many barriers to sound environmental practices.

But government policies and on-farm decision are closely related. Improved management practices will require clearer signals from federal farm policymakers and a renewed commitment from producers to practice careful and precise farming methods that protect environmental quality.

We believe that changes in farm policy designed to encourage, rather than discourage, environmentally sound farming practices could help bring about a new mode of "high precision" farming that is highly productive and environmentally sound.



NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin
Lancaster County
Agricultural Agent

To Control Wild Garlic

We may like onions on our hamburgers and in other foods, but very few of us like onion-flavored milk. This can easily happen on dairy farms where wild garlic plants are allowed to grow. Many pastures are infested with wild garlic. One of the best times to start control measures on this weed is early in the spring when the young plants are 4 to 8 inches high. An application of 2,4-D will knock them down. Follow the label for directions. When this is applied around the middle to latter part of March, little damage is done to any legume in the area. If garlic plants are allowed to mature each year, the pasture area will become so contaminated that dairy cows cannot utilize the grass.

To Be Concerned With Heifer Housing

Heifer housing plans should consider heifer's needs and management tasks to be performed at various stages of their life cycle, according to Glenn Shirk, Extension Dairy Agent. Also consider the handling and storage of feed and manure, labor efficiency, costs and convenience.

Calves can be housed in individual hutches and pens, away from other cattle and protected from the manure and air of older cattle.

Open front buildings with bedded packs can provide adequate and economical housing and manure storage.

At 4 to 6 months of age, calves are better able to adjust to free stalls and to Virginia style heifer barns. These barns are more costly, but they require little to no bedding. However, alleys need to be scraped regularly and provisions for manure storage are needed.

Farm Forum

Editor:

If the drop in the M. and W. price of 99¢ per cwt. between December 1989 and January 1990 was enough to swallow, then area dairy farmers should really choke when they hear the February M. and W. amount of \$12.22, which is \$1.74 per cwt. less than January's price. This means in two

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Using slatted pits in the alleys eliminates the need to scrape alleys, and provides some needed manure storage.

To Be Aware That A Popular Herbicide Will Be Restricted Use Chemical In 1991

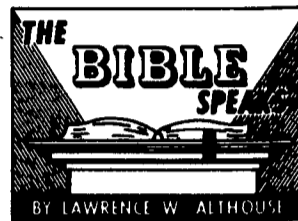
According to Robert Anderson, Extension Agronomy Agent, new restrictions from the Environmental Protection Agency will set new guidelines for one of agriculture's most heavily used pesticide, Atrazine. Atrazine which forms the basis of most corn herbicide programs throughout the country will fall under new use guidelines in 1991. Applicators must be certified private applicators or commercial applicators to purchase and apply Atrazine starting next year. In addition, protective clothing must be worn when handling the material. Areas within 50 feet of wells or sink holes will be banned as locations for mixing, loading or applying Atrazine under the new restrictions.

Farmers do favor the protection

of groundwater from agricultural chemicals, according to recent studies. An American Farmland Trust survey found that farmers surveyed in the Midwest would favor penalties for excessive pesticide use.

To Practice Safety Around Manure Pits

Many manure pits will be cleaned out at this time of year for field application. This by-product of the livestock and dairy business is very useful as fertilizer. However, the pit can be a safety hazard because of poisonous and explosive gases. When the mixture is agitated in order to be removed, these gases are more plentiful and much more dangerous. Good ventilation above the pit is very important. Also, anyone who goes down in the empty pit should be wearing a gas mask. These gases are dangerous and can be fatal to both humans and animals. We urge all farmers to caution their employees of this potential danger.



DIFFERENT RULES

March 11, 1990

Background Scripture:

John 16.

Devotional Reading:

John 16:1-11.

A few years ago, while we were in Naples, Italy, we had a few close shaves while we were driving around the city. As a matter of fact, we even had some narrow escapes after we had turned in our rental car and were on foot. When we spoke of this to the manager of our hotel, he smiled and said, "When in Naples, you must understand that a red light here does not mean stop and a green light does not mean go. The Neapolitan drives by rules all his own."

Despite the fact that almost the whole world abides by certain basic traffic rules and standards doesn't seem to matter in Naples. In a sense, that must be true of the Christian, too — not in traffic matters, of course, but in the way we operate in the world. Certain words and symbols must have a different meaning for us than the rest of the world, not because we want to be different, but because, until the whole world is in step with God's plan and purpose, we have to be.

BY THE SWORD

For example, take the commonly-held belief that truth must be imposed by force. Most of the wars our world has known have been fought on that presumption. The bloody Crusades were fought for the purpose of defending the faith from the heresy of Islam. (Of course, there were a lot of other less noble motivations, too.) The fallacy in this idea is prefigured in Jesus' words to his

disciples: "They will put you out of the synagogues; indeed the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God" (16:2).

Lots of people have thought that they were "offering service to God" by killing and maiming others "for the faith." These people are sincere, but horribly mistaken! Why do they do this? "And they will do this because they have not known the Father, nor me" (15:3). If you really know God in Christ, you will know you do not need to defend his honor. Just as vengeance belongs to God alone, so does the defense of faith. We are called by Christ, not to defend the faith, but to live it and that will be defense enough.

OUR ADVANTAGE

Another commonly held concept is that it would be better if Christ were still physically present in this world. Many of us tend to look at his physical "absence" as an unfortunate reality with which we have to deal. But Jesus tells his disciples, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away..." (16:7a). The physical absence of Christ is not something to regret, but rather a cause for rejoicing. By leaving us physically, Christ has been freed of all the limitations of the physical body and can now be with every Christian everywhere: "For if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."

The world's concept of "defeat" and "victory" cannot be normative for Christians either. At this moment, it would seem that drugs, official corruption, sexual immorality, and materialism are "winning" and that the churches with their declining memberships and influence are "losing." But Christ bids us take a different perspective: "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (16:33).

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Farm Calendar

Saturday, March 10
York Pork Producers annual meeting and banquet, tentative date.
Franklin Co. 4-H Dairy Awards Banquet, Kauffman's Com-

munity Center, 7:00 p.m.
Maryland Cooperative Geurnsey Breeders Association annual meeting, Wacohn Grange Gall, Washington Co.

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