

# Environmental Safety Means \$Millions

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Farm supply dealers will spend at least \$100 million on environmental safeguards over the next five years, according to a new survey.

Dealers were surveyed on safety and environmental issues at a recent conference on agricultural legislative issues in Washington, D.C. The conference was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and ICI Americas Inc., a leading manufacturer of crop protection products.

More than 200 dealers — representing about one-sixth of the nation's agrichemical sales — answered the survey, according to ICI.

### Spending for safeguards

The dealers said that during the past five years, they had spent an average of almost \$55,000 each on environmental safeguards. They projected that such spending

would be 79 percent higher for the next five years. That means the average dealer will spend about \$97,000 by 1995 to safeguard his plant against environmental mishaps.

"Farm suppliers are spending money on both structural and informational aspects of environmental protection," said David Walton, ICI business manager.

Structural safeguards include such improvements as impermeable concrete floors and dikes for chemical storage and loading areas to prevent potential spills or groundwater contamination. Informational costs include educational programs and complying with ever-tightening regulations on farm chemicals.

Some 93 percent of the dealers said that farmers and farm suppliers are equally or more concerned about environmental issues as people in urban areas. An overwhelming 225 dealers — 97 per-

cent of the group — said they consider themselves to be environmentalists.

### Read the label

A majority of farmers rely on dealers for crop production advice, according to the survey. The dealers named a wide variety of environmental safeguards that they typically recommend, including:

- Following all directions on EPA-approved product labels.
- Managing nitrogen fertilizer rates and applications to minimize potential groundwater contamination.
- Controlling soil erosion.
- Properly rinsing and disposing of leftover containers after farm chemicals are applied.

Close to 80 percent of dealers surveyed said they recommend low input sustainable agriculture (LISA) practices, and that their customers are using them. The two LISA practices dealers men-

tioned most often were soil testing and crop rotation.

But 96 percent of dealers said non-farm/urban populations do not believe farmers are practicing low-input management.

### Misunderstood by public

Dealers believe that farm community's position on environmental issues isn't well understood by the general public. Eighty-five percent said that urban consumers do not believe farmers are using sound environmental practices.

However, most dealers aren't opposed to public opinion playing a part in the regulation of farm chemicals. Sixty-three percent said regulation should be based on a combination of scientific review and public opinion. A large minority, 37 percent, believed that only scientific review should be considered.

Sixty-three percent of dealers said that to best serve the public interest, federal government should regulate farm chemicals. A surprising 70 percent said state government should regulate farm chemicals; 27 percent said it should be the responsibility of loc-

al government. In the survey, dealers could choose more than one governmental body that they thought should regulate farm chemicals.

About 155 dealers — 69 percent of the group — said they would like to see more leadership from the USDA extension service in educating farmers and suppliers about environmental safeguards.

**Commitment to environment**  
On the whole, the survey results show a movement among growers and dealers toward self-imposed environmental safeguards, said Walton of ICI. "A key element in the campaign, however, will be showing the non-farm public just how committed the agricultural industry is to environmental protection," Walton said.

Virginia Smith, a farmer and congressional representative from Nebraska, told a group of farm suppliers during the conference, "the greatest environmentalists are our farmers and ranchers. We have more at stake in preserving our land than anyone else, because we're working off the land and preserving it for our children."

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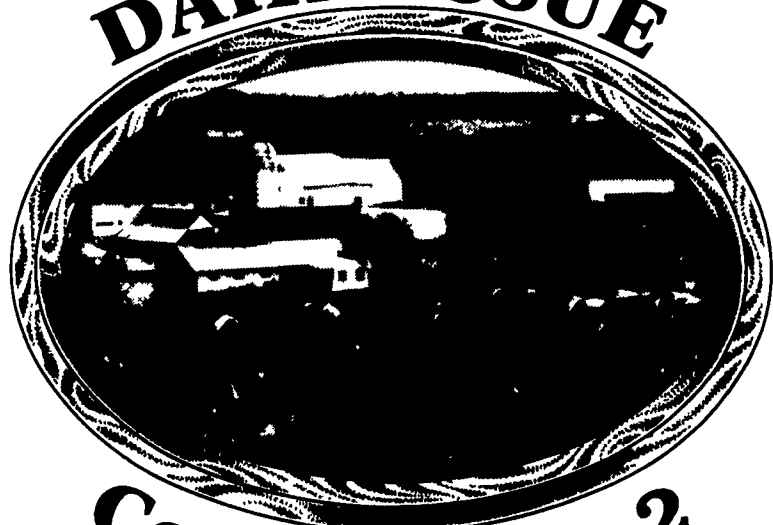
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