

Conference Shows Producers How To Benefit From Technologies

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — The team of more than 100 Pioneer Hi-Bred agronomists from across the country converged in Indianapolis recently to learn more about today's latest crop production and precision farming technologies from leading university and company experts.

The educational conference featured presentations on topics such as new herbicide systems, insect and disease management strategies for corn and soybeans, 1997 Pioneer agronomy research findings, performance and management of ECB-resistant corn hybrids, and new products under development for special end-use markets.

"Pioneer has a long standing tradition of providing agronomic knowledge and in-field assistance to our customers to help them improve profitability. Our Agronomy Conference is an integral part of that effort and sets the stage for our efforts during the coming crop season," said Paul Carter, agronomy sciences manager at Pioneer in Des Moines, Iowa.

With an estimated 80 percent of Pioneer® brand hybrids being consumed by livestock, a focal point of the conference was an update on the Pioneer-Optimum joint venture and new products under development for end-use markets. Agronomists learned more about the pending launch and agronomic management of highly available phosphorus corn hybrids. These hybrids allow livestock to absorb more of the phosphorus, leaving less to be excreted in manure.

Other products in development include corn hybrids high in available lysine and hybrids that combine the benefits of high oil, high lysine and highly available phosphorus. Soybean varieties will soon feature value-added traits such as high oleic, low linolenic, low saturates, high protein and high sucrose for use in the food, feed and industrial markets.

"Pioneer agronomists not only hear from leading university and industry experts plus the Pioneer team of nearly one dozen agronomy research managers and precision farming experts, they have a unique opportunity to learn from each other during our Hall of Ideas exhibition," Carter said.

An agronomic trade show of sorts, the Hall of Ideas featured more than 50 exhibits from Pioneer agronomists, researchers, product managers and technical experts from across the country. Presentations on insect and weed management systems for soybeans and corn were popular among the agronomists attending.

"Today, seed is often the delivery mechanism for weed and insect management choices. Pioneer agronomy research has been evaluating these different systems, many since before their introduction to producers," said Dennis Wickham, agronomist from Hilliard, Ohio. "I can take this information back to the customers in my area to help them evaluate these systems and determine which systems best fit their production challenges and profitability goals."

In addition to information from Pioneer, the agronomists also heard from Tom Bauman, Purdue University and Bob Hayes from the University of Tennessee on the

efficacy and crop responses from new herbicide systems.

Precision farming presentations on yield map interpretation and split planter comparisons also were popular among the agronomists attending.

"Proper use of yield monitors and mapping systems and the interpretation of the data from these

systems to help develop site-specific management plans are the focus of our precision farming efforts," said Phil Bax, agronomist from Spencer, Iowa. "In my area, I've also worked with producers to conduct split planter comparisons. This technique lets a producer compare two products or

management practices in parallel strips across a field to help choose the method that offers the greatest production benefit. It's just one more way we can help producers maximize the return they get from Pioneer products."

Comparisons can include established versus new hybrids or varieties, two fertilizer treatments

such as starter and no starter, two seeding rates or seed treatments or products from different seed companies.

The Pioneer Agronomy Conference is a week-long event held each year in February. This year's event was attended by guests from Europe, Africa and Asia.

United Ag Services Posts Reports

HORSEHEADS, N.Y. — United Ag Services recently held its annual meeting at the Holiday Inn.

In his opening remarks, President J. W. Welch stated how pleased he was with the continued sustained growth of United Ag Services and its member cooperatives.

Membership grew by 31 percent this past year. He believes United's basic structure of providing member services and quality markets while not being required to invest in bricks and mortar appeals to dairy farmers. A strong commitment to sustaining the family farm without regard to size is the basic concept of United and its members cooperatives.

James Patsos, United CEO, presented the financial report. United continues to maintain a strong equity position. Earnings are kept at a minimum in order to maximize the return to the dairy farmer members. Many cooperatives brag about the thousands or millions of dollars returned to their producers without revealing the true measure — the amount per hundred weight returned. United's philosophy is to improve the monthly milk checks of its members.

Efficiencies in operations have allowed United to have no increase in dues since its inception more than 10 years ago. United has also been able to enhance its income by providing accounting, employee payroll, and other services to individual dairy farmers and other agricultural businesses.

In his management report, Patsos remarked about how challenging a time we have in the dairy business today — possibly one of the most exciting items in history. Plant sales, co-op mergers, Federal Order reforms, and the Northeast Dairy Compact expansion into New York and Pennsylvania all demand our attention and involvement.

Currently milk prices have shown some improvement; however, we can expect normal seasonal adjustments this year. Moreover, we should not see the dramatic changes in prices which took place over the past several months.

The current strong national economy will help buoy the demand for dairy products, thereby helping to uphold better milk prices this year.

Patsos also spoke about the cooperative's efforts to work with dairy farmers in western New York to develop a market for organic milk.

Peter Fredricks of the market Administrator's office discussed the Federal Order Reform process and the timetable of voting and implementation. He encouraged the dairy farmers to

attend the hearing in Syracuse and submit written comments regarding the proposed order.

Edward Gallagher, director of planning and regulatory reform for DairyLea, spent considerable time discussing the proposed order reform and how it would impact the dairy farmers. He urged all members to write to USDA Secretary Glickman, requesting the use of Option 1a for pricing class I milk. Option 1b would reduce class I prices by

\$1.07 per hundredweight when fully implemented. He also discussed the effect of the change from farm point pricing to plant point pricing.

Following the discussion period, Robert Nichols, Addison, N.Y. Don Hamilton, Millerton, Pa.; and Laverne McCarty, Forksville, Pa.; were re-elected to the board of directors Eldon Towner, Bath, N.Y. and Douglass Steward, Rome Pa. were newly elected directors.

Because United Co-op has a one-member, one-vote policy, the increase in membership required the addition of two directors to the board.

Outgoing President J.W. Welch was presented a plaque in recognition of his many years of dedicated service to dairy farmers. Douglas Stewart also made a presentation to Welch since he has resigned as president of Progressive Dairyman's Cooperative.

Agricultural Cooperatives Leaders Complete Directors Institute

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — A seminar on the role and responsibilities of the director in leading an agricultural cooperative was held at the 14th Annual Cooperative Director Institute here at the Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel.

More than 40 participants from 13 states and several international representatives attended the institute, which offers issue-driven educational programs to develop the business and leadership skills of cooperative members.

Sponsored jointly by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and Penn State's Cooperative Business Education and Research program (CBERP), the institute identifies and develops emerging lead-

ers within the cooperative community.

The institute trains directors of the region's member-owned cooperative organizations to build the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the rapidly changing business environment. To be successful, cooperatives must maintain and increase their value by helping members improve profits, gain access to markets and services, and limit risk.

Other topics addressed at the institute included director liability, communications, strategic issues in cooperative mergers and joint venturing, board management relations, leadership, strategic planning, understanding cooperative finances, and the changing legal and regulatory environment.

Keynote speakers included Bruce Anderson, professor of agricultural economics at Cornell University; Gordon Milbrandt, cooperative leadership consultant from Spokane, Wash.; Don Schriver, executive vice-president of newly formed Dairy Farmers of America (DFA) Cooperative Inc.; Dennis Mullen, president and chief executive of Agri-Link Foods Inc.; Donald Dufek, retired senior vice-president of Kroger Foods Inc.; Poerter Little, vice president of CoBank; Chris Fox of Agway Cooperative Inc.; and William Frantz, manager of environmental affairs for Ocean Spray Cranberries Inc.

Dr. Robert D. Steele, dean of Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, and Samuel E. Hayes, Jr., Pennsylvania's secretary of agriculture, addressed the conference at separate luncheons. A panel of industry experts led discussion of key issues driving strategic moves by their organizations.

Following presentations by Mullen, Schriver and Dufek on behalf of AgriLink Foods (Pro-Fac), DFA Cooperative Inc. and Kroger Foods, respectively, the panelists answered questions about their recent experiences.

An advanced director institute, coordinated by Cornell Cooperative Extension and Northeast Cooperative Inc., and Kroger Foods, respectively, the panelists answered questions about their recent experiences.

An advanced director institute, coordinated by Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Northeast Cooperative Counsel (with support from CoBank), is scheduled for November 1998 in Albany, N.Y. Penn State CBERP, with the Pennsylvania Council of Cooperatives, also offers ongoing training in cooperative principles; general business concepts and practices; and leadership for cooperative employees, young cooperative leaders, and older teens. For more information, call Penn State CBERP at (814) 863-0644 or send electronic mail to cberp@psu.edu.

Dairy Profit Seminars

Aug. 11-13

At Empire Farm Day

STANLEY, N.Y. — Keep the dates of Aug. 11-13 open for the fourth annual Dairy Profit Seminars to be held at Empire Farm Days in Seneca Falls, N.Y. at the Rodman Lott Farm.

Management seminars held daily offer new ideas and information for Northeast dairy producers. Complimentary lunch is served to all dairy producers who attend.

Tuesday, Aug. 11 features alternative management styles and employee relations. Wednesday, Aug. 12 overviews cow comfort and using sand bedding for the ultimate in cow comfort. Thursday, Aug. 14 highlights nutrition and will especially emphasize on-farm shrink — how to avoid feed loss after your commodities are on the farm.

Melanie Wickham, Empire Farm Days Show manager, said "The Dairy Profit Seminars are a tremendous way for dairy producers to keep up the the latest information while seeing and

hearing what others in the industry are doing. The panel discussions featuring your peers allows everyone to learn something new. Be sure to join us."

Seminar sponsor Agway Agricultural Products offers the daily sessions as a way for Northeast dairy producers to continually gain useful management information. Mark Giles, director of strategic development, said "We feel very strongly that the Dairy Profit Seminars are invaluable for all our customers. The seminars address topics that are timely and useful in today's dairy industry."

With hundreds of exhibits and displays, Empire Farm Days offer many opportunities for farmers to see the latest agricultural technology and products. Plan now to attend. The Dairy Profit Seminars are sponsored by Agway Ag Products, Syracuse, N.Y. and coordinated by HFW Communications, Sandy Creek, N.Y.