

OPINION

Fairness, Sound Science Should Guide

Farm Bureau last week told a congressional panel that the only fair way to implement the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA) is to evaluate pesticides using real-world data and to give researchers ample time to develop viable alternatives to crop protection tools that may be wiped out by the law.

At first heralded by farmers, legislation promising to modernize the nation's food safety laws has now become growers' worst nightmare thanks to the misguided enforcement by the Environmental Protection Agency, said American Farm Bureau Federation President Dean Kleckner.

"In 1996, Farm Bureau members nationwide were urging their members of Congress to pass FQPA," Kleckner told a House Agriculture subcommittee, "but they would have never done so knowing what they know now."

FQPA was intended to replace the outdated zero-tolerance standard for measuring pesticide residues on food with a new health-based standard reflecting modern science's ability to detect chemicals at extremely low levels — a move lauded by agriculture and environmentalists alike.

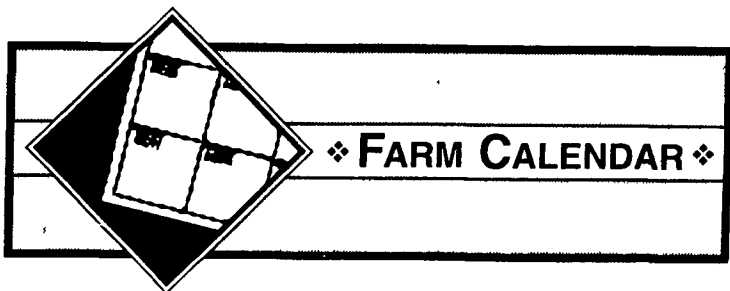
But since the law's passage, EPA has been harshly criticized for side-stepping Congress' original intent. Kleckner described EPA's handling of the implementation process as being riddled with bad science and a disregard for accepted rule-making practices.

One of Farm Bureau's greatest concerns is that EPA has continually rejected the use of real-world data in its efforts to re-evaluate the safety of commonly used farm chemicals. Instead, the agency has relied heavily upon default assumptions about exposure levels. For example, Kleckner said, EPA "assumes that farmers use pesticides at maximum rates, on all acres, and apply the maximum number of applications."

The end result, he explained, is that "those types of assumptions have very little resemblance to real-world exposure." In one such case, EPA's assessment of a pesticide used commonly on apples appeared to be a serious health threat when default assumptions were used, yet that same chemical was deemed safe when realistic data were incorporated into the evaluation.

Kleckner said this gap between worst-case and real-world data underscores the need for a stronger partnership between EPA and the Agriculture Department. He called on lawmakers to "clearly instruct EPA" to use its data call-in authority in order to obtain reliable information from farmers, registrants and others.

"With real-world data, we can replace these worst-case assumptions, but it takes time and cooperation from EPA and USDA," said Kleckner.



Saturday, May 1
Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival, Howard County Fairgrounds, West Friendship, Md., thru May 2.
State 4-H Forestry Day, Rockspring, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Creating Habitat Using Native Plants, Penn State Berks Campus, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Sunday, May 2

Monday, May 3
19th Annual FARMER Banquet, Hotel Hershey, Hershey, reception 5:30 p.m., dinner 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 4
Retail Farm Market School, Lehigh County Ag Center, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Pasture Walk, Lowden Farm, Coal Center, 7 p.m.
Fulton County Conservation District Agribusiness Breakfast, McConnellsburg American Legion Post 561, 8 a.m.

Wednesday, May 5

Thursday, May 6
Sheep Shearing School, Pat and Chris O'Brien Farm, Amity, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., also May 7.
Lancaster/York Fruit Grower's Twilight Meeting, Masonic Homes Orchards, Elizabethtown, 6:30 p.m.

Friday, May 7

Saturday, May 8
N.Y. Hereford Breeders spring sale, cooperative extension, Morrisville, N.Y., 12:30 p.m.
25th Annual Western Pa. Sheep and Club Lamb Sale, Mercer County 4-H Park, Mercer, 6:30 p.m.
Capitol Area Beekeeper Association Short Course In Beekeeping, Dauphin County Ag and Natural Resources Center, Dauphin, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
Eastern Shore Spring Show, Queen Annes County 4-H Park, Centerville, Md.
Forestry Workshop, George and



Now Is The Time

By John Schwartz

Lancaster County
Agricultural Agent

To Properly Plant Corn

One of the most important areas in corn production that the farmer has control over is planting. According to Robert Anderson, Lancaster County Extension Agronomy Agent, planting may be divided into several important areas. These include the date the crop is planted, the depth the seed is planted, the spacing between the rows and the spacing of the plants within the rows.

A key factor to remember is that a plant's production potential is a function of photosynthesis. Photosynthesis is done in the leaves of the plant. Therefore, the management system should strive to have the maximum leaf surface available on the day with the most sunlight.

The day which has the potential for the most sunlight is June 20th, the longest day of the year. Therefore it is necessary to plant early, plant high populations and plant at the ideal depth for uniform and fast germination and making sure that seeds are spaced uniformly within the rows.

To Evaluate Starter Fertilizer

Corn growers are aware of two key factors associated with fertilizer these days. First, it is expensive. Second, too much may be bad for the environment.

According to Robert Anderson, Lancaster County Extension Agronomy Agent, corn growers need to weigh the benefits of using a starter fertilizer when planting against the financial and possible negative impact. Starter fertilizer is usually most beneficial in cold, wet soils. Under these conditions nutrients are not always readily available to small plants. This is especially true of immobile nutrients like phosphorous.

Deciding when to or not to apply a starter fertilizer should be based on weather conditions and fertility level of the soil.

Corn is most likely to show a response to starter fertilizer when planted into cool soils and will remain cool based on the weather forecast. In addition, corn is most likely to show a response to starter fertilizer when soils are low in phosphorous.

Soils with optimum to high levels of phosphorous are less likely to show a yield response. Soils with an excessive level of phosphorous, even under cool growing conditions, are not very likely to show a response.

Joan Freeman Tree Farm, 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

Sunday, May 9
Happy Mother's Day!

Monday, May 10

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Farmers who do use a starter fertilizer, may receive the maximum benefit when applying them at the minimum rate their equipment will allow unless the soils are deficient in phosphorous.

To Lower SCC Counts

The National Mastitis Council (NMC) has proposed to lower the legal limit for somatic cell count (SCC) from 750,000 to 400,000 by January 1, 2003. The average United States SCC is around 360,000.

However, 15 to 20 per cent of the United States herds could not meet the 400,000 SCC level today. The NMC proposes adopting a rolling 12 week average SCC beginning January 1, 2000. The SCC will decrease over the next three years until it reaches 400,000 in 2003.

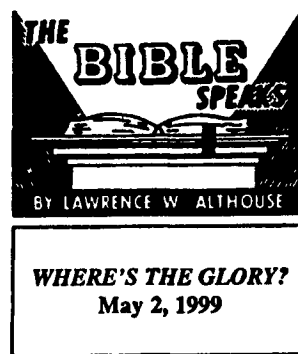
According to NMC, a healthy

cow's SCC nearly always averages less than 200,000. A SCC of 400,000 means about 12.5 per cent of quarters in a herd are infected. At 750,000, you will see inflammation in about 25 per cent of herd quarters.

Increased SCC impacts a dairy farmer's profits. Reduced milk production, treatment costs, discarded milk, premature culling and lost milk quality bonuses are some of the economic losses associated with high SCC.

If you herd SCC is over 400,000, you need to look for ways to reduce your SCC today. Contact your veterinarian or county extension agent for ways to reduce your SCC.

Feather Prof's Footnote. "Ability may get you to the top, but it takes character to keep you there." John Wooden



WHERE'S THE GLORY?
May 2, 1999

Background Scripture:

John 12:20-50

Devotional Reading:

Romans 5:1-11

When Jesus announced, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified," (12:23). I'm sure the disciples assumed that he meant that the homage paid him by the crowds on Palm Sunday would be capped by some even greater exhibition of God's favor. Isn't that what one would expect if they were to be "glorified?"

But they must have been puzzled when he replied, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit." What does being "glorified" have to do with a seed dying and bearing "much fruit?" The disciples must have felt euphoric about the great reception along the Palm Sunday road, but now Jesus is sounding doomed!

His next words are even more portentous: "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also." What is Jesus suggesting about the fate of those who follow him? Surely being in the vanguard of the Messiah is not meant to be a hazardous association! Who would join a Messiah who promised, not security, but danger?

DANGER AHEAD?

If they listened carefully to what Jesus said next, they would realize that even the Messiah himself would be endangered: "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour?' No, for this purpose I have come to this hour," (12:27).

Is Jesus saying that this dangerous situation which he is anticipating is the way things are supposed to go? Jesus has already said that his disciples "must follow me." That is scary because it is obvious that Jesus is headed in harm's way.

Ironically, their Master's next words are: "Father, glorify thy name." Something very strange follows: there was a great noise, everyone would agree to that. But what made that noise? "The crowd

standing by heard it and said that it had thundered. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him'." So some of them heard the answer to Jesus' prayer: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

Jesus explains to the disciples that "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine." In other words, the road to the Messiah's glorification ran through the valley of the shadow of death — as must theirs as well. Glorification seems entirely incompatible with danger and death. Where's the glory in death? Jesus has already explained that if something dies it can yet, like a seed buried in the earth, yield "much fruit." Something good can come from this dangerous path he is following: only through death that we can know eternal life.

THE COSMIC CROSS

But this is about more than just one person's death or even that of his followers. The whole universe will be affected. By his death Jesus will utterly defeat Satan, "the ruler of this world" and his death will reconcile all humanity: "... I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (12:32). Read in this light, Jesus' message is not really one of doom and gloom, but of the glory of God in Christ. As horrible as the cross will be, it will form the bridge whereby God is able to unloose his love into the cosmos. "I have come as light into the world," says Jesus, "that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness" (12:46).

It is interesting, then, that having taught his disciples that he and they must tread a dangerous path to glorification, "... many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (12:42). They wanted to play it safe, but you can't play it safe and follow Jesus Christ. You can have one or the other, but not both.

Where's the glory in danger and death? Answer: just on the other side. Either way, playing it safe or taking up a cross, it is a gamble. Each of us has to decide on what we will bet our lives.

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