

Crop Insurance Videoconference Looks At Changes For 2000

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — The drought of 1999 makes crop insurance a hot topic, and a videoconference from Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences will help agricultural producers around the state to get answers to many of their risk management questions.

"Pennsylvania Crop Insurance: What's New for the Year 2000" will be available via satellite from 7 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 9. The event is sponsored by Penn State Cooperative Extension in cooperation with the USDA and Pennsylvania Farm Bureau.

The purpose of the videoconference, according to Jayson Harper, associate professor of agricultural economics, is to help farmers understand how crop insurance works in Pennsylvania.

"This summer's drought has many producers looking for ways to reduce risk on their farms," Harper said. "The videoconference will cover risk management options for farmers and will show why crop insurance is an important consideration in any producer's risk management planning. It will look at the different kinds of crop insurance products available and how Pennsylvania producers can use them effectively."

Harper said that, while crop insurance is far from new, it traditionally hasn't been popular in Pennsylvania, a state where operations are smaller and more diversified. But changes in the crop insurance program and in the products available are making insurance a better risk management option for farmers.

John Berry, Penn State Cooperative Extension agent for Lehigh County, will moderate the videoconference and present an overview of the state's crop insurance climate. Harper will look at overall risk management issues and address the effectiveness of crop insurance in protecting farmers against yield losses. Cliff Parker, chief underwriter for the regional office of USDA's Risk Management Agency, will contrast conventional crop insurances with newer product options.

Gene Gantz, president of Ag Risk Strategies Inc., will join Berry to present an update of pending federal and state crop insurance legislation. Gantz also will provide side-by-side performance comparisons of risk management products, using worksheets and sample problems. The panel also will discuss the USDA's new Crop Revenue Program and catastrophic insurance options. Audience members will be able to call a toll-free telephone number to ask questions of the studio panelists.

The videoconference is free to

attend, but advance registration may be required at some sites. For the nearest downlink site, contact the Penn State Cooperative Extension office in your county. Home satellite dish owners can contact the office for direction and assistance in downlinking the event. Test patterns will begin at 6:45 p.m., followed by a 7 p.m. broadcast on satellite SBS-6, Transponder 2 (frequency 11749, polarity: V, orbit: 74 W).

For more information, contact Ag Information Services at (814) 865-6309.



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