

IPM To Teach School Students Real-World Science

AMES, Iowa — America's dairy farmers will need to begin relying more on their own means and less on governmental policies to lift prices out of one of the worst slumps on record, a national milk marketing organization said recently.

Producers were hit with yet another devastating blow as the November Basic Formula Price (BFP) was announced at \$9.79, a slide of \$1.70 from last month.

Base prices paid to producers have fallen nearly \$6.50 in the last two months, and the November BFP was more than \$7 lower than the same time last year. This was the lowest BFP since August 1978.

"This nation's independent dairymen cannot possibly survive with these prices," emphasized Gene Paul, president of National

Farmers Organization (NFO). "Steps must be taken immediately to bring base prices back to profitable levels."

The organization strongly advocates dairy policy with a system of price supports and supply management incentives.

"Producers can petition their cooperatives to create marketing-agencies-in-common (MAIC) by partnering with other organizations," Paul said. "This type of arrangement would help producers develop their own supply management programs, with floor prices fair to both producers and consumers."

By agreeing on a reasonable floor price implemented through a MAIC, dairy farmers can avoid devastatingly low base prices. Additionally, the organization

suggests producers enroll more milk into national collective bargaining programs and donate surplus milk to charitable groups. By using collective bargaining, producers can increase competition for available supplies.

"Producers must stop relying solely on Washington for relief," Paul said. "While some form of fair dairy policy is surely needed,

producers can accomplish much of what is necessary more quickly."

Washington wrangled recently over changes to dairy pricing. Earlier this year, USDA unveiled a plan drastically revamping 60-year-old dairy policy; however, Congress overturned the plan in favor of a system closer to the one already in place. Washington has promised to take a fresh look at

dairy legislation when Congress reconvenes in January.

"Had Congress taken milk floor prices and supply management into consideration, much of this unprecedented market volatility wouldn't be harming producers," Paul pointed out. "When Congress reconvenes in January, we will begin the push to have these issues inserted into new dairy policy."

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NFO: New Dairy Legislation Is Not The Only Answer

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — The three Rs and the ABCs long have been staples of the public school curriculum. But soon, Pennsylvania students also will be learning their IPM, thanks to a regulation recently adopted by the state board of education.

The regulation mandates that integrated pest management, or IPM, be taught as part of the "ecology and the environment" curriculum. Proposed academic standards specifying what students should learn about IPM and related subjects are expected to be approved soon.

IPM aims to manage pests — such as insects, plant diseases, and weeds — by using knowledge of pest biology in combination with physical, biological, and chemical tactics that are safe, profitable, and environmentally compatible. Farmers, landscapers, foresters, homeowners, and others who use IPM often can reduce pesticide use.

The Pennsylvania IPM Program, a collaboration between Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, worked with the state education department to develop the proposed IPM academic standards. With a grant from the federal Environmental Protection Agency, the Pennsylvania IPM Program now is developing IPM materials and hands-on activities for use in K-12 classrooms.

"IPM integrates scientific knowledge with real-world, problem-solving skills," said Lyn Garling, Penn State IPM education specialist. "Because IPM is an information-intensive, scientific approach, it is a good learning tool in subjects such as biology, chemistry, math and statistics."

"IPM can help students to develop critical-thinking skills and to become better-informed citizens who can contribute to society's decision-making process," Garling said. "Ultimately, we want to overcome science illiteracy and increase public involvement in environmental issues."

Garling said learning IPM principles also will give students a greater understanding of agriculture and food production issues, including the complex decisions and problems faced by farmers.

"Pest management must take into account such factors as when the pest will emerge, the pest's biology, and what tactics can be used successfully to control that pest," Garling said. "It's a very complicated and scientifically based enterprise, and many people don't appreciate that. They think farmers just spray pesticides all over the place and that's the end of that. But that's not often the case."

In addition, Garling said students will learn how IPM can be used in nonagricultural settings, such as homes, gardens and even school buildings. "Many school districts have adopted IPM to manage pests on school grounds," she said. "By working with teachers and school maintenance personnel to scout for pests and implement the IPM techniques that they've learned in the classroom, students will have opportunities for hands-on

learning."

Penn State and agriculture department IPM specialists have held workshops to educate teachers about IPM concepts and to illustrate

how IPM relates to various facets of ecology and the environment. "Teachers not familiar with IPM often come in confused, but leave enthused," Garling said of the workshops.

For more information on IPM, visit the Pa. IPM Program's Web site at <http://paipm.cas.psu.edu>.

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