

USDA Announces New Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — USDA officials are adding another dimension to helping farmers improve water quality and provide wildlife habitat in 20 counties in southeast and central Pennsylvania, including Lancaster County, through the new Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

Sign-up begins June 1, 2000, and continues until the state acreage quota is met.

USDA has set a goal to provide conservation benefits on a total of 100,000 acres in the 20 county area with 25,000 of these acres established in buffers.

The Farm Service Agency will provide cost-share for installing conservation practices as well as land rental payments in return for not cropping the land. Cost-share is set at 50 percent with state efforts under way to increase that figure to 100 percent.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will provide planning, design, and installation assistance to farmers for practices such as establishing permanent grass cover, tree plantings, grass waterways, forest riparian buffers, and wetland restoration.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission has provided funding to NRCS for nine wildlife habitat specialists which will be positioned throughout the eligible counties.

"This is an excellent example of a federal and state partnership working for the health of

the land and the future of a healthy ecosystem," said Janet Oertly, NRCS State Conservationist. "Our employees have a history of working one-on-one with landowners to plan options which cover all the aspects of the environment—oil, water, animals, air, and humans. CREP provides another tool to use in that planning process."

Considerations will be given to landowner and renter relationships in these 10 to 15-year contracts which will reduce erosion, improve water quality, and provide food, water, and shelter as well as travel corridors for wildlife. USDA is partnering with the Pennsylvania Department for Environmental Protection, Pennsylvania Game Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Ducks Unlimited, the Chesapeake Bay foundation, and others.

"CREP is similar to the Conservation Reserve program (CRP) in land eligibility and contract lengths," said Bill Baumgartner, FSA state executive director. "It is different from CRP in that land rental payments and cost-share are much higher. This program should really benefit the land and the landowner."

CREP is a unique program sponsored jointly by USDA and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. State officials are working to increase the cost-share amount to 100 percent. CREP is now available in 12 states, in-

cluding the neighboring states of Maryland, Virginia, New York, and Ohio.

Interested landowners should contact their local USDA Service Center for more information on how to participate.

Office Closed July 4

In honor of Independence Day, the *Lancaster Farming* office is closed Tuesday, July 4. The office will reopen Wednesday, July 5.

For the July 8 issue, there are some deadline changes: Public Sale and Mailbox ads, noon, Monday, July 3.

Classified, Section D ads — 5 p.m., Wednesday, July 5.
Classified, Section C, Farm Equipment ads, 9 a.m. Thursday, July 6.
General News — noon, Thursday, July 6.

Significant Knowledge Gap In Debate Over GMO

PARIS, France — Consumers around the world are taking home a negative message about genetically modified organisms (GMO). More consumers see the issue as one where the risks outweigh the benefits, according to a new poll of 5,000 adults by Angus Reid Group Worldwide.

Increasingly, it seems that consumers see the issue as one of food safety and public health rather than progress in science and technology.

Over half of consumers in Japan, France, Germany, Australia and Canada see the issue in a health and safety context. In the U.S., 44 percent see it in that context, as do 39 percent of shoppers in the United Kingdom. Only in Brazil, where awareness of the issue is the lowest, is it seen largely as a science and technology matter (61 percent).

Among the eight countries

polled, the trend toward GMO foods was seen most negatively in Japan (82 percent), followed by Germany (73 percent) and France (71 percent). Americans are growing more disenchanted with the concept. Forty-five percent of Americans held a negative view when polled by the Angus Reid Group in 1998, compared to 51 percent earlier this year.

The same holds for Canadians — 59 percent hold negative views about GMO foods, up from 45 percent two years ago. In Brazil, just 45 percent of shoppers view this trend negatively.

When it came to identifying the benefits or advantages of GMO foods, the most commonly mentioned benefit is productivity-related (improved efficiencies/higher yields in food

production), mentioned by 31 percent.

On the consumer end of it, 15 percent mention better quality foods and another 15 percent mention fewer pesticides. As well, one in 10 mention the potential for improved nutritional value of GMO foods.

Of particular note is that 25 percent of those surveyed expect GMO foods to provide no benefits or advantages. An additional 10 percent were unsure of any benefits that might result.

While awareness is fairly high on a global scale, more than four in 10 consumers — ranging from 44 percent to 58 percent — still say they only understand "a little" about GM foods. Understanding is greatest in Germany, Australia and the U.K.

Americans and Brazilians are least likely to say they understand the issue.

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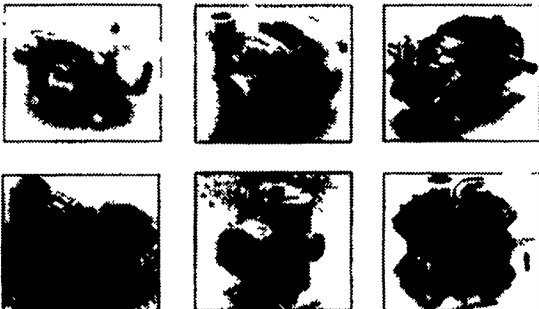
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