NASS Agriculture Counts

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FORAGE STATISTICS — NEW FOR 2000 CROP YEAR

I am pleased to announce the first measure of *all* hay harvested in Pennsylvania, not just dry baled hay. Over the years, making haylage has become a very prominent practice in the northern dairy states. We have been remiss in not generating statistics for what is nearly one-third of all hay harvested in Pennsylvania.

Historically, only dry hay acreage and production has been collected from farmers and published in the annual "Crop Production" annual report published every January. All dry hay statistics began in 1866. In 1919, breakdowns were added for Alfalfa dry hay and Other dry hay. The 2000 crop year brings the first measure of haylage and greenchop in Pennsylvania and seven other states across the U.S.

Seven other field offices of USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) were also involved in this pilot program to measure all hay production annually. The states publishing dry hay and haylage/greenchop production are Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. The only large haylage/greenchop state excluded from the pilot program was California, which was the third largest state according to the 1997 Census of Agriculture.

As always, the NASS January 11, 2001 Crop Production report published dry hay production for 48 states broken down by All Hay, Alfalfa Hay, and Other Hay. The report also contained four new tables with acreage, yield, and production statistics for the eight pilot states.

The first two new tables show Haylage and Greenchop production as green weight for Alfalfa only and all hay acreage. The second pair of tables combine dry hay statistics with the new Haylage/Greenchop data to publish all hay harvested (forage) statistics on a dry equivalent basis broken down by Alfalfa acres and all acres. (For the complete report, see http://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/reports/nassr/field/pcp-bban/.)

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA), our partner in agricultural statistics, has asked us to divide the state hay statistics into county level information. We have provided this service for many years for dry hay. The 2000 crop year would be the first time we generate county statistics for all hay harvested, including haylage/greenchop. If we can make statistically sound estimates by county, this information will be published in our 2000-2001 Annual Summary. The annual summary is also published in hard copy in the fall.

We hope it won't come, but sooner or later we will have to survive another poor growing season. Both state and county figures are very important in learning where average hay yields are unusually low. This information is available to farmers and grower organizations to be able to search for other sources of feed in a lean hay year. Government agencies also use this data when they must decide on financial assistance to hay farmers.

In 1999, our dry hay statistics were used by PDA and other agencies as a major factor in detecting low yields and administering an assistance program. Unfortunately, these new haylage statistics were not yet available to better evaluate the haylage and greenchop situation.

Cooperative extension is another major user of these new hay statistics and information about all other commodities. They need solid statistics to show how and where they need to serve Pennsylvania agriculture. Statistics are an important part of justifying extension research grants and positions in various county offices or in State College. I have met many agents recently and they often tell me how important these statistics are to their work in cooperative extension.

Now for the numbers:

In 2000, Pennsylvania ranked 16th in the nation for dry hay production with 4.4 million tons of dry hay. After adding haylage/greenchop, Pennsylvania ranked third among the eight pilot states with 6.3 million tons of hay on a dry equivalent basis.

Only Wisconsin and Minnesota produced more with 11.7 and 8.7 million. tons, respectively. Two million acres were harvested for hay in Pennsylvania in the 2000 crop year. Of that, 1.8 million acres were cut at least once for dry hay and 620,000 acres were cut for haylage/greenchop. Dry hay harvest yielded 2.46 tons per acre while haylage/greenchop yielded 6.25 green tons per acre.

Together, all hay harvested from Pennsylvania's 2 million acres yielded 3.17 tons per acre on a dry equivalent basis.

Hay and forage statistics are only made possible by the farmers who take the time to complete our surveys. Most folks do. Your cooperation helps us to generate timely, accurate, and useful statistics in service to Pennsylvania and U.S. agriculture. Thank you!