FSA Announces New Crop Loss Coverage For Noninsurable Crops

DAUPHIN (Dauphin Co.) — The noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers new and improved crop loss coverage opportunities beginning with crop year 2001.

"Unlike the old NAP, and other disaster programs that take time to implement, the new NAP program will provide immediate relief to farmers," said FSA's Jenifer Hershey, county executive director. "Loss adjusters will inspect the damaged crops in some cases, the local county committee will review the claim, and payments will be issued once the loss threshold is reached."

NAP covers 50 percent of the producer's expected production at a payment rate equal to 55 percent of the crop's average market price. Benefits are limited to $100,000 per crop year for each participant.

Since the 1995 crop year, FSA has offered NAP assistance for noninsurable crops each time a widespread catastrophic loss occurred due to damaging weather. Beginning with crop year 2001, availability of NPA benefits will be based on producers' individual crop losses, rather than on losses occurring in a large area.

These guaranteed benefits, subject to a minimal administrative fee, will provide risk protection during the time when crops are most vulnerable and will be individualized based on the farmer's ability to produce the crop.

NAP covers all noninsurable, commercially grown crops produced for food and fiber, including honey, forage and grazing crops, turfgrass sod, Christmas trees, seed crops and aquaculture.

In addition, controlled environment crops are also eligible such as mushrooms and floriculture.

Crops in Dauphin County that could be eligible for NAP include peppers, potatoes, onions, squash, cucumbers, cantaloupes, alfalfa, and hay. Producers can check eligibility of their particular crop at their local FSA office.

To be eligible for assistance, applicants must annually pay a nonrefundable service fee of $100 per crop, per administrative county. Fees are capped at $300 per county not to exceed $900 for farmers with interests in multiple counties. Limited resource farmers may request a waiver of this fee.

Applicants are encouraged to provide prior year's production data to FSA to establish a documented yield history for loss calculations and payments. To be eligible for NAP, a farmer must have risk in producing the crop and must comply with a conservation plan. The applicant's qualifying gross income cannot exceed $2 million.

FSA is currently accepting applications for NAP coverage for 2001 crops. Farmers who sustained weather-related crop damage to a 2001 NAP crop and timely reported acreage and losses may be eligible for coverage.

Verifiable or reliable records of production must be submitted to the administrative FSA office no later than the final acreage reporting date for the applicable crop in the immediately following crop year. The application period for 2001 crops will end 30 days after the Federal Regulations are published.

Producers with noninsurable crops should contact the Dauphin County office at 1451 Peters Mt. Rd., Dauphin, PA 17018, phone (717) 921-2378 or visit FSA on the World Wide Web at http:/www.fsa.usda.gov.

Fall Webworms Have Returned

Dr. Robert S. Hansen
Bradford County
Extension Forester

The fall webworm is beginning to construct its ugly nest in forest and shade tees in our area. The fall webworm is a widely distributed defoliating pest of shade trees and shrubs and appears from late summer through early fall. They are particularly fond of nut trees such as black walnut and hickory, but they well feed on a variety of species. The webworm constructs its nest over the end of the branch and only feeds on leaves within the web. The large conspicuous web is filled with caterpillars, dead, partially-eaten leaves, and fecal droppings. The remains of these nests may persist through winter.

The fall webworm overwinters as brown pupae in a cocoon that is concealed in trash, ground litter, cracks and crevices, or in the soil. Adult moths first appear in early June but may continue to appear in small numbers during most of the summer.

Moths vary considerably in color from pure white to white with black spots; their wingspread is about 1¼ inches. Females deposit their light yellow eggs in hair-covered masses of several hundred eggs, usually on the undersurface of the leaves. Young larvae hatch in approximately seven days. They immediately begin to spin a silken web over the foliage on which they feed. As they grow, they enlarge the web to enclose more and more foliage. These webs sometimes encompass two to three feet of the infested branch.

The larvae are gregarious and feed together until the last molt, after which they feed independent of each other. Larvae mature in about six weeks. Young larvae are pale yellow with two rows of black marks along their bodies. When fully grown, they are covered with whitish hairs that spring from black and orange warts. The larvae vary as to the depth of coloring and markings, but are usually greenish with a broad, dusky stripe along the back and a yellow stripe along the side. Full-grown larvae leave the web and pupate on or in the soil, or in crevices around buildings or fence posts. There are one or two generations per year, depending on the geographical location.

Fall webworm larvae skeletonize and consume leaves under the protection of a tent-like web that they enlarge as they grow and require additional food. Since tree leaves are in the process of "shutting down" their processes this time of year, webworms may defoliate a tree occasionally, but rarely kill it. On shade trees, the webs usually occur on an occasional branch. They may not injure the tree appreciably, but they reduce its ornamental value.

Natural enemies of various kinds help to control this insect. Birds, insect predators and insect parasites attack the fall webworm larvae. Predators and insect parasites may destroy clusters of eggs. It is also possible to reduce their numbers by mechanical control. When the tented branches are within reach, they can be snipped off and destroyed. This is practical if the tents have not become too large and the tree's shape is not threatened by this method.

Bt is effective if applied when the webs are small. Remember that the larvae must consume Bt for it to be effective in controlling the insect. Other chemical control measures can be used throughout the webworm season, but they are most effective when the webs are small.

The entire tree need not be sprayed, but webs and surrounding foliage should be thoroughly covered. Remember that care should be taken when using any pesticide and directions on the label must be followed exactly for both safety and effectiveness.

Report: U.S. Aquaculture Yields Promise, Raises Concerns

WASHINGTON, D.C. — As the American consumer's demand for seafood continues to rise, so too does the likelihood that the fish, shrimp, or shellfish purchased at the market or restaurant has been farm raised.

Aquaculture — farming or finfish, shellfish, or aquatic plants — continues to grow rapidly worldwide, with production doubling by weight and value from 1989 to 1998.

In the U.S., aquaculture facilities now exist in every state and certain regions are seeing rapid growth.

A new report presented to the Pew Oceans Commission examines the role of the emerging U.S. aquaculture industry in meeting the nation's demand for seafood and its current and potential impacts on the marine environment. The report recommends steps to ensure that domestic aquaculture grows in a sustainable fashion, and calls upon the U.S. to take a global leadership role in adopting best practices.

"The reality today is that aquaculture is supplying a significant source of protein to consumers as wild ocean fisheries are depleted or reach their limit," said Leon E. Panetta, chair of the independent Pew Oceans Commission, which is conducting the first review of national ocean policies in more than 30 years. "There are a number of issues related to this growing industry that can affect the quality of our oceans. This report looks at those concerns and presents recommendations for balancing the expected growth in aquaculture production with the protection of those natural species and habitats that are essential to the future of our oceans."

The report's authors are Dr. Rebecca Goldburg and Matthew Elliott of Environmental Defense and Dr. Rosamond Naylor of Stanford University. They find that farmed fish and shellfish supply one-third of the world's seafood, and that in the U.S., aquaculture (including imports) provides almost all of the catfish and trout and nearly half of the shrimp and salmon currently consumed.

Although American aquaculture represents just over one percent of the world's production, about 4,000 aquaculture facilities exist in the U.S., ranging from enclosed tanks on land to netpens and shellfish beds in bays and estuaries. Collectively, they raise over 100 different species of aquatic animals and plants, and support jobs and provide new sources of seafood for consumers.

"With supplies of wild seafood limited and demand rising, aquaculture will likely continue to expand in the U.S.," said Goldburg. "Aquaculture is here to stay. The challenge is to ensure that this young industry grows in a sustainable manner and does not cause serious ecological damage."

The authors find that the present harmful effects of U.S. aquaculture on the marine environment are minor compared to overfishing, coastal development, or global warming. They also point out that the aquaculture industry is diverse in its methods and practices and that some segments of the industry, such as shellfish growing, can have ecological benefits. Nevertheless, they recommend immediate action concerning several problem areas:

- Eliminate or drastically reduce the accidental release of farmed fish into the wild. The accidental release of farmed fish may harm wild fish populations through interbreeding and competition for habitat and food. In addition, escaped fish may spread diseases and parasites throughout an ecosystem. For example, escaped farmed Atlantic salmon may threaten endangered wild Atlantic salmon off the Maine coast and wild Pacific salmon in the Northwest. Supporting federal activities under the Endangered Species Act to protect wild salmon populations is a key element of protecting native fish.
- Reduce the use of wild fish for fish feed. Some types of aquaculture, particularly salmon aquaculture, use large quantities of wild-caught fish as feed ingredients. Increased catches of small fish for use in feed would reduce the amount of food available for wild predators such as large fish, marine mammals, and seabirds. The authors call for greater federal research to identify alternatives to the use of wild fish for fish feeds, and the cultivation and promotion of noncarnivorous aquaculture species.

In addition to these recommendations, the authors also propose several additional steps to limit the current impacts of aquaculture:

- Develop strong effluent guidelines for aquaculture under the Clean Water Act, particularly for larger-scale aquaculture pens that discharge wastes directly into coastal waters.
- Put in place an environmentally protective federal permitting program for offshore aquaculture before this developing segment of the industry becomes established.
- Champion research and development investments and cost-share incentives for sustainable aquaculture practices, such as recirculating on-land systems.
- Seek greater environmental sustainability through the World Trade Organization, with the goal of allowing environmental considerations in the production of traded-food commodities to play a far larger role in trade decisions.

The Pew Oceans Commission is an independent group of leaders, led by former White House chief of staff Leon Panetta, which is conducting a national review of the policies needed to restore and protect the oceans' living resources. The commission includes leaders from ocean research, fishing, conservation, industry, and government.

The marine aquaculture report is the second in a series of scientific reports that will assist the independent commission with its review. In addition to aquaculture, the commission is reviewing coastal development, marine pollution, fishing, invasive species, ocean governance, and marine protected areas. The commission will issue its formal recommendations to the President and the Congress next year.

Copies of "Marine Aquaculture in the United States: Environmental Impacts and Policy Options," are available online at www.pewoceans.org or by calling (703) 516-0624. To receive a PDF version via e-mail, contact Justin Kenney at kenneyj@pewoceans.org.