

# Lancaster Farming

## OPINION

### Conservation Program Threatened

Guest Editorial By Read Smith

President, National Association Of Conservation Districts

An excellent program that will help farmers implement conservation measures on their land is at risk.

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) was included in the 2002 Farm Bill, which was signed into law by President Bush earlier this year. It was to allocate \$2 billion, most of it in incentive payments, to encourage conservation practices on cropland, grazing lands, and forest lands.

CSP was intended to be a nationwide program, open to any farmer large or small who wanted to make environmental improvements on his or her farm.

Now the agriculture appropriations committee of the U.S. House of Representatives wants to water down the CSP and turn it into a pilot program, limited to only a few farms in one state, Iowa. This would be a major setback to growers and to the environment.

The reasons to adopt CSP are as sound today as they were in May when both houses of Congress agreed it should be part of the new Farm Bill. CSP is a major recognition that working farmlands are a critical factor in the environmental and ecological equation. Other farm programs, such as Conservation Reserve, take sensitive land out of production, but this new program addresses conservation on the millions of acres that remain in production.

Farmers have long recognized that the practices they employ on their land can have either a positive or a negative impact on the environment. The way we handle waste and manage soil erosion can have a major effect on community watersheds. For many years, soil and water conservation districts and the Natural Resource Conservation Service have worked with growers to develop and implement techniques that minimize the impact of producing food and fiber.

Many growers have implemented nutrient and pest management plans. Others have planted buffer strips along streams or established trees to firm up riverbanks. Still others are planting winter cover crops or establishing grass waterways. Every year, thousands of new acres are converted to direct seeding, which can reduce soil loss by 90 percent or more and provide food and habitat for wildlife.

Farmers have done this on their own, even though it has meant a major commitment of time to learn new practices, money to purchase new equipment, and land diverted from productive use. CSP will ensure that growers who have made the commitment will stay the course and it will provide incentives for other farms to incorporate similar improvements.

CSP also provides an avenue for the nonfarming community to support the environmental improvements that are sought by our society as a whole, including cleaner water, less erosion of topsoil, and a better environment for wildlife. When car manufacturers were told to improve gas mileage and reduce emissions, they were able to pass on their costs. When power plants were told to reduce their air emissions, those costs were included on utility bills.

Farm field runoff is in the spotlight now, but farmers have no way to pass on their costs, a reality that is reflected in the CSP cost-sharing incentives. Erosion and runoff are serious environmental issues. Sedimentation impairs more miles of stream than any other water pollutant in the U.S. It chokes out aquatic life, spoils streams for recreation, and poses difficult problems for water treatment facilities. When soil particles wash off fields, they can carry manure, pesticides, and fertilizer with them.

In recent years, agriculture has made major improvements in reducing topsoil loss. CSP is a way to expand that improvement. CSP is a benefit for growers, it is a benefit for the environment, and it benefits society as a whole. It is a program that will work if Congress will give it a chance.

Read Smith is a wheat and livestock producer from Washington state, and president of the National Association of Conservation Districts.

**FARM CALENDAR**

- Saturday, August 24
- 4-H Regional Horse Show, Berks County Show Grounds.
  - Ohio: Livestock and Forage Pest Management School, Eastern Ohio Resource Center, Caldwell, Ohio, (740) 732-2682.
  - 4-H Livestock Sale, Harford Fairgrounds, noon.
  - Tree Identification Workshop, Cornplanter State Forest Headquarters off Rt. 36, near

- Tionesta, 9 a.m.-noon, (814) 723-0262.
- Sunday, August 25
- Indiana County Fair, thru Aug. 31.
- West End Fair, thru Aug. 31.
- Monday, August 26
- Ohio Manure Science Review 2002, Auglaize County Fairgrounds, Wapakoneta, Ohio, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., (419) 738-2219.
- Dairy Day at New York State Fair, 8:30 a.m. registration.
- Dairy Outlook Teleconference with Dr. Ken Bailey, various locations.
- DOPP Training, extension office, Towanda, 10:30 a.m.
- Tuesday, August 27
- Big Knob Grange Fair, thru Aug. 31.
- Allentown Fair, thru Sept. 2.
- Greene-Dreher Sterling Fair, thru Sept. 2.
- Centre County Holstein Show, Centre Hall Fairgrounds, 1 p.m.
- Agriculture Field Day at Virginia

**How To Reach Us**

To address a letter to the editor:

- By fax: (717) 733-6058
- By regular mail: Editor, Lancaster Farming P.O. Box 609, 1 E. Main St. Ephrata, PA 17522
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Please note: Include your full name, return address, and phone number on the letter. Lancaster Farming reserves the right to edit the letter to fit and is not responsible for returning unsolicited mail.

**Now Is The Time**  
By Leon Ressler  
Lancaster County Extension Director

**To Take Stock Of Your Silage, Forage Inventories**

Will you have enough silage and other forages to carry you through to the next harvest season? Lancaster Dairy Agent Glenn Shirk suggests you check your current inventories, anticipate your yields for this year, and determine if you will have sufficient quantities.

Many corn fields that were planted for grain will be salvaged as silage because of poor ear development and poor pollination. If these fields do produce grain, it could have lighter bushel weights and lower feed value because of severe drought stress. Poor kernel development could also result in lower feed value of silage; according to some tests, its feeding value may only be 91 percent of that of normal-eared silage.

Corn with no ears can have fairly good feed value because a lot of its nutrients are retained in the stalk, and even though fiber levels may be higher, it can sometimes be more digestible. On the other hand, if the corn becomes too dry and starts "burning up" its nutrient reserves in a desperate effort to survive, its feed

**THE BIBLE SPEAKS**

BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

**THE POVERTY OF WEALTH**

**Background Scripture:**  
Proverbs 19:17; 22:1-4, 8, 9, 16, 22,23; 23:10,11.

**Devotional Reading:**  
Proverbs 19:1-8.

By the time you go to bed this evening, 35,000 poor children throughout the world will have died in this 24-hour period. Thirty-five thousand died yesterday and another 35,000 will die tomorrow. In our own country, more than 15 million children live in poverty and nine million lack basic health care.

In the 1990s we celebrated "the victory of capitalism over communism." Yet, as Professor Joerg Rieger reminds us, since this "victory," poverty levels in both faraway places and at home have mushroomed alarmingly. The victory celebration was premature. Not only are the poor "still with us," but there are so many more of them.

Concurrent with the growth of worldwide poverty has been a dramatic change in the way we think and speak about the poor. Many today blame the poor for their poverty. The helpless and indolent are all

value might only be 66 percent or less of that of more normal silage.

So, as you try to determine the value of silage, consider moisture, kernel development, ear development, harvesting, and transportation costs and other problems such as spoilage, nitrates, etc. Also remember that this year's silage may not pack as well. That increases the risk of spoilage and it means silos will hold less tonnage; silos will get empty more quickly, so you may need to "put up" some extra silage in bags and other storage facilities.

**To Care For Next Year's Strawberry Crop**

Late August and Early September is when strawberries set their fruit buds for next year's crop. In the conventional production system, they also produce additional runners during this period as well. There are several steps you can take to maximize the potential of next year's crop.

First, you need to irrigate to relieve drought stress on the plants. Since water is short through this dry weather, you may be tempted to skip the strawberries since there is no fruit in the field at this time. This would be a serious mistake and will reduce the potential of next year's crop. Irrigation will relieve the water stress, which will put the plants in a good condition to produce fruit buds.

A number of growers experienced a mediocre crop this spring. When discussing this with these producers, I learned they did not irrigate last fall. This certainly contributed to the less-than-desirable crop this spring.

The other step you should take now is the second application of nitrogen. You should have fertilized with about 40 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre in early July at renovation. If you did that, you should now add an additional 20 pounds of nitrogen per acre to give the plants another boost. If you did not fertilize at renovation, then add 40 pounds of nitrogen per acre now. Irrigate to incorporate the fertilizer.

If the current dry weather persists, continue to irrigate through September. When the temperatures drop in the fall, strawberries resume vigorous growth and it is important to remove

the water stress to enable the plants to produce next year's buds and runners.

**To Update Your Acreage, Base, And Yield Records With The Farm Service Agency**

Commodity producers have until Aug. 31, 2002 to verify and update records on planted and prevented planted acres filed with the Farm Service Agency, according to Richard Pallman, Pennsylvania state executive director, FSA. Nonparticipating producers who do not have an existing Production Flexibility Contract (PFC) contract with FSA also have until Aug. 31 to report acreage and provide verifiable documentation of prior year plantings if they want to participate in all farm programs for the 2002 through 2007 crop years.

"Reviewing, verifying, and updating bases and yields may be the most important thing we ask producers to do this year," said Alarie Fleming, program section chief of the FSA state office. "The information we have on file must be correct in order for producers to receive accurate direct and counter-cyclical payments in the future."

To assist, FSA is sending letters to producers across the country asking for their updates. The letter includes a summary acreage history report showing 2002 PFC crops and contract acreage along with acreage history by crop for each of the years 1998 through 2001 for covered commodities. Included are planted acres and/or acres prevented from being planted for 1998 through 2001.

If the information in the letter is correct, and changes are not necessary, the producer does nothing. If the information is not correct, a producer should visit the local FSA offices before the Aug. 31 deadline and provide verifiable documentation of planted and/or prevented planted acreage and yields. Verifiable documentation may include seed receipts, production records, and crop insurance records.

**Quote Of The Week:**  
"You can't hold a man down without staying down with him."  
— Booker T. Washington

poured together into one category and judged to deserve their poverty.

vast and unconscious that it seems like a natural force."

**A Question Of 'Worth'**

Even many of those who believe in ministering to the poor assume that we ought to limit this ministry to those who are "worthy." That is a self-serving attitude because it provides us with comfortable limits of benevolence. Whatever you and I have been given is gift of grace. Whatever we give to others is also a matter of grace. It is all grace!

**The World Of Things**

I am concerned today for both the poor and all the rest of us, whether we are middle class, affluent, or wealthy. Our problem is not only that we ignore the plight of the poor — and even blame them for it — but that we are so enamored of the world of things that our own souls are in jeopardy.

In all the Bible I do not think you will find any suggestion that we are called to minister only to those who are worthy. In Proverbs 17:5, when the sage says, "He who mocks the poor insults his Maker," he does not add "unless they deserve it"! In Prov. 19:7, when he says "He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed," the question of whether these poor are worthy is never raised. In 21:13, when the sage warns, "He who closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself cry out and not be heard," he does not modify it with "unless the poor deserve their poverty."

As Henry van Dyke once warned us, "Remember, what you possess in the world will be found at the day of your death to belong to someone else, but what you are will be yours forever."

In all, there are 35 references to the "poor" in the Book of Proverbs, more than in any other book of the Bible, although copious references are also found in the Psalms, the prophetic books and the New Testament. This theme runs through the Bible from beginning to end.

Actually, if we are affluent (and who among us would admit that we are?), we are impoverished in a way we might not suspect. The sage tells us, "He who loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich" (21:17). Furthermore, Erich Hoffer observes that "Our frustration is greater when we have much and want more when we have nothing and want some. We are less dissatisfied when we lack many things than when we seem to lack but one thing." While the poor person is in danger of starvation, we are in danger of damnation!

Although many of us today close our eyes and ears to the plight of the poor, the Bible presents the ministry to the poor, not as an elective for Christians, but an imperative at the very heart of the Good News of Jesus Christ. There can be no room in Christian discipleship for what Stephen Vincent Benet called "the arrogance of the rich — an arrogance so

The writer of Proverbs promises us, "He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed" (19:17). And he who is not kind to the poor will learn what it means to be afflicted with the poverty of wealth.

**Lancaster Farming**  
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