

FSA Urges Crop Producers To Update Acreage, Yield Info

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program sign-ups. If you make an appointment you will avoid long waits and the FSA staff can prepare for your visit.

Question 13: Is conservation compliance a requirement for participation in this program?

Answer: Participants must have and be implementing a Conservation Plan. If the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) determines there is highly erodible land on the farm, you will be required to certify that you are following an NRCS developed Conservation Plan, or self-certify that you are implementing a conservation system. FSA recommends producers re-

view the NRCS fact sheet on conservation compliance or discuss the contents of their plan with NRCS personnel.

Question 14: What if I can't contact a landowner or he won't sign the forms?

Answer: On April 2, all farms will be assigned a base and yield. The base will include the 7-year Production Flexibility Contract acres plus the eligible soybeans. This is considered option 2 under the program and it may not be the best option for the farm. Getting the owner's concurrence is your responsibility. If you are picking up new farms it is important that you know how to reach the owner. You are required to have documentation of operator-

ship on these farms prior to receipt of benefits. Participants may self certify to a conservation plan which they are using.

Question 15: What can I do if some of the landowners on one of my farms will not sign?

Answer: All of the landowners on a farm must agree on a base option by April 1, 2003. If not all of the landowners will sign you may be able to have the farm reconstituted. This would mean you could break that farm into multiple farms. The farms for which you can get the owner to select a base option would be able to be enrolled right away. Those you can not get signed can wait until after April 1st. On April 2nd all farms will be assigned a

base and yield. The base for a farm with no base election by the owner will be the seven year Production Flexibility Contract (PFC) acres on that farm plus the eligible soybean acres. This is considered option 2 under the program. It may or may not be your best option. If the farm had no PFC acres the new base will be the eligible soybean acres only.

Question 16: If I have never reported crops before, what evidence do I need to prove existence and disposition of the crop?

Answer: To prove existence of the crop you may use seed receipts, receipts for cleaning of seed, custom work receipts, documentation of contract to produce a specific crop, aerial slides, documentation obtained and certi-

fied by another government agency, or third party verification. To prove disposition of the crop you may provide sales slips, documentation of contract to produce a specific crop, records showing the crop was fed to livestock, proof of custom harvesting, third party verification, or if unharvested - records supporting the destruction of the crop. You may not use third party verification for proof of both existence and disposition. You should check with your local FSA Office on the information you need to get credit for this missing acreage.

Critical dates: base and yield updates ends April 1, 2003. Direct and countercyclical payments program ends June 2, 2003.



New Farmers, New Generation

Marion Bowlan

Pennsylvania
Farm Link

Getting Started in Farming Nothing in farming is simple.

Over the last nine years I have talked to hundreds, maybe even thousands, of people who want to get started in farming. Some grew up on family farms, but unfortunately the family farm of their youth is no longer an option. Others have been nudged aside by another, sometimes older sibling. Still others never

grew up on a farm, but think they would like to farm because they love working outside, with animals, with nature, etc.

Just recently I spoke to a young man who grew up on a farm that had been in his family for more than 100 years. His parents were struggling to remain profitable in a time of high taxes, low profits, and intense urban pressure. Tired of the long days

and low returns, they decided to sell the farm. Unfortunately, he had siblings who didn't want to farm, but wanted the highest dollar their parents could realize on the sale of the farm.

Although the farm was sold several years ago, this young man still could not talk about it without choking up with emotion. His dream to take over the farm was gone and he was reluctant to allow himself to even think about a future in farming. He challenged me, as many previous aspiring farmers have, wanting to know why he should hold out any hope; it was too difficult, too hard to turn a profit, too demanding.

What was unspoken, but I heard, was his desire to be a farmer. His passion for farming was unmistakable. Despite his protestations, he wanted me to tell him how it could be done. What's the answer? As I tell peo-

ple who want to get started and those who want to transfer their farms to the next generation, there is no cookie-cutter recipe. No farm, farm family, or farmer is alike. I might add that if there was a set way to get into farming, most young entrepreneurs probably wouldn't like it.

So what advice did I give this young man? I suggested that he learn how others have gotten started, talk to them, and learn from them. He should talk to people who have started on family farms, taken over other farms from retiring farmers, or started from scratch. Try to determine and research the best strategy for his family and make decisions on what will work for him. I could provide information and guidance, but ultimately he needed to pursue and seek out the answers.

I also suggested that he attend workshops and read about others who got started in farming, and how. The ways to enter vary from starting small, with no money, and retaining an off-farm job, to borrowing money and signing production contracts. Only he could decide what was right for him.

My observations and experience indicate that the more successful beginners have started small and taken it one step at a time. By doing so, they were more likely to be successful and able to advance to the next step than by jumping in and trying to accomplish it all at once. Otherwise, it truly can be overwhelming.

I said, "Start with the assets that are going to give you the most return, your labor and your passion. Once you have experience under your belt and have learned how to manage your farm business, you can think about purchasing land. Is it possible to get started in farming today? Certainly!"

To learn more about how to get started in farming, come to our Ninth annual New and Beginning Farmer Workshop Saturday, March 1, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Holiday Inn, Harrisburg-Hershey off of Rt. 81. Contact Pennsylvania Farm Link at (717) 664-7077 or e-mail us at pa-farmlink@redrose.net for additional information and registration.

Va. Agriculture Summit Scheduled For March 4-5

RICHMOND, Va. — When you want good advice, go straight to the top.

Virginia farmers, growers and producers will have that opportunity at the upcoming Virginia Agriculture Summit, a two-day conference scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday, March 4 - 5, in Richmond.

The focus of the Summit is "Managing the Risks of Dynamic Change" and recognized authorities will explore many of the issues confronting the agriculture industry today.

Speakers will examine where future markets will exist, agriculture's upcoming megatrends, entrepreneurial and value-added business development and risk management. Experts will also provide insights about cooperative development, value-added products and grants management.

A panel of entrepreneurs who have found success in a variety of

agricultural fields will discuss their experiences as they explore "Challenges, Opportunities and Successes."

Workshops will cover grant writing, export readiness training, creating a business plan, increasing profit potential by partnering with the tourism industry and business structures.

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, and the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Risk Management Agency are sponsoring the event.

The Virginia Agriculture Summit will take place at the Sheraton Richmond West, 6624 West Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia.

The deadline for registration is February 7, 2003. Space is limited so register early. The registration fee is \$50 and covers meals and breaks. A limited number of discounted rooms will be held at the hotel until February 7.

For additional information and to receive a registration form, contact Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, P.O. Box 27552, Richmond VA 23261 or phone (804) 290-1107, fax (804) 290-1081 or e-mail ccook@vafb.com.



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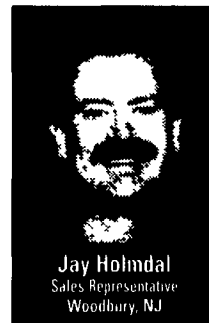
No Longer the "Best-Kept Secret" in Agriculture

Dow AgroSciences is working to shed the idea that we are "the best-kept secret in agriculture." We took that recent comment from a highly reputable dealer as a compliment. It was his way of saying that we are an ag company with a future, and somebody worth doing business with. He also felt the world of ag needed to know about our growth.

Therefore, here are some things that have happened recently at Dow AgroSciences - things we believe make us a company worth doing business with:

- We are launching new Keystone* and Keystone LA herbicides this season. These soil-applied acetochlor and atrazine premixes give us the most complete, effective corn herbicide portfolio in the industry.
- We possess the second-largest portfolio of US ag biotechnology patents, which has led to the recent launch of Hercules'™ I Insect Protection, a new, broader-spectrum in-plant insect protection trait for corn. Also in development is a trait that will protect young plants against corn rootworm.
- Our recent purchases of Mycogen Seeds and Cargill Hybrid Seeds will allow the seed and crop protection divisions of our business to work closely together to make corn products - both for biotech and conventional hybrids - that produce optimal yields.
- Our acquisition of Rohm & Haas Co made us a leader in the fungicide marketplace and boosted our position in horticulture, fruits and vegetables, permanent tree crops and turf and ornamental.

To learn more about Dow AgroSciences, visit our Web site at www.dowagro.com



Jay Holmdal
Sales Representative
Woodbury, NJ

Dow AgroSciences

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