

Ag Newsletter

October 2009

**Cooperative
Extension Service**
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Dates to Remember

Nov 3 – Women in Agriculture Conference

Tuesday night in January – Fulton CATS
At New Extension Office

Websites of Interest

Fulton County Extension:
<http://fulton.ca.uky.edu>

Grain Futures & Options:
<http://www.cmegroup.com/>

eXtension:
<http://www.extension.org/>



Cam Kenimer
Fulton County Extension Agent
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Yield Contest

This is your official reminder for the Yield Contest. We have only had a few entries. Prize money is still available to those who enter. Let's show off our crop so that everyone will know that Fulton County is a great place to farm!

This 2nd Annual Yield Contest is being sponsored by Ty Parker with Monsanto, Scott Mitchell with Pioneer, the Fulton County Extension Service, and the Hickman Tourism Commission in conjunction with the Hickman Pecan Festival. Cash Prizes will be awarded to the winners. The contest is open for both corn and soybeans and there is no charge to enter.

Last year was our first year for this and we had three excellent entries in the corn division. Let's make it even better and have at least five entries from each of the corn and soybean divisions.

Anyone who farms in Fulton County is encouraged to participate in this contest. For more information, please contact myself at the Fulton County Extension office at (270) 236-2351.



Corn Harvest Issues

With all the rain we've been getting, corn harvest is way behind schedule. Here are a few tips to consider on whether or not to go ahead and harvest.

1. If the weather is cool, cloudy and/or wet, there may be very little to no drydown. So, in a normal year, you might expect corn grain to dry down by 5.6 percentage points in a week. For this season, with the current weather, expecting corn to dry down by 2 percentage points in one week could be optimistic.
2. If corn has reached 25% grain moisture, the risks with leaving corn in the field with the current weather conditions are: 1) increased chances for sprouting in the ear, which leads to poorer quality and increased chance of dockage, 2) increased chances for Diplodia, etc. to spread on infected ears, 3) increased chances for ear loss from wind, 4) increased chances for lodging, and 5) increased chances for another rainstorm to come in and do more damage.
3. The negatives of harvesting corn grain wet (between 25 and 16%) are: 1) increased demand and wear on drying equipment, 2) increased drying costs, 3) increased dockage if sold directly off the farm, 4) increased weight per bushel of grain for hauling (i.e. more hauling costs), and 5) increased chance for spoilage if dryers are not working properly.
4. If we knew exactly what the weather forecast was for the next two weeks, we all could make some really smart decisions. Aside from an accurate weather forecast, I would suggest trying to get into fields between the wet weather. If possible, target fields that are drier and/or fields at greater risk for lodging.



Save Energy and Money Now

Save energy and save money. According to the United States Department of Energy, 46% of your utility bill goes for heating and cooling your home. As we prepare for colder weather, there are a few easy steps you can take to save money on your winter energy bills. To cut your energy use for heating and cooling set your thermostat as high as is comfortable in the summer and as low as is comfortable in the winter. You may also want to consider a programmable thermostat. A programmable thermostat allows you to automatically set your thermostat to turn up and down the heat or air when you are not home. By turning back the temperature during the day while you are at work, the Department of Energy estimates a 10% savings in your utility bills. Proper maintenance is also key to keep your heating and cooling system running efficiently. Don't forget to clean or replace filters on furnaces once a month, you may want to check your filters more often if you have pets at home. Make sure air-registers are not blocked by furniture, carpeting, or drapes. Finally, do not underestimate the value of natural sunlight, during cold weather, keep the window coverings on south facing windows open during the day to allow the sunlight to warm the house, but remember to close drapes and shades in the evening. For long-term savings consider energy-efficient products when you buy new heating and cooling equipment. Home appliances with the ENERGY STAR label meet the U.S. Department of Energy's efficiency guidelines.

If you are looking for additional tips to save energy and money at home, check out the Energy Savers <<http://www1.eere.energy.gov/consumer/tips/>> webpage. Energy related educational materials may be found on Moneywise <<http://ces3.ca.uky.edu/moneywise/energywise.html>>.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy - <http://www1.eere.energy.gov/consumer/tips/>



Grain Marketing Tips

Over the past year, a shift has occurred in the grain markets, which has made prices considerably lower than the record highs seen in the summer of 2008. With harvest under way, corn and soybean producers have choices to consider when marketing their crop in the current climate, said Cory Walters, extension agricultural economist in the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture.

"For corn, the market is telling you to store and forward price at the same time," he said. "That's because corn futures have a fairly significant positive carry, or price difference, between current and future contracts with the futures significantly higher."

A positive carry justifies a grower storing the crop if the amount of carry or price difference offsets any storage expenses, interest and other costs specific to each farming operation. Growers can choose to get a futures contract now and store corn. They can also take a speculative, and more risky, approach and store corn without a contract commitment in hopes the markets will go higher.

The soybean market looks very different than the corn market, though. While a drop also occurred in soybean prices, it is not as steep as the drop in corn prices. Unlike the corn markets, current and future contract prices are nearly identical. This means there is a need for the new crop now. Some growers may want to sell now, but others may choose to store the crop, Walters said.

"If you choose to store soybeans, consider taking a speculative position with the hope that future prices between when you put them in the bin and when you pull them out are greater than the cost of storage."

While grain markets are significantly different than 2008, it does not mean grain producers will have an unprofitable year.

"If you take last year's prices out of the equation and average prices from the four previous years, current corn prices are still above average," Walters said.

He added since 2008 prices were so high, producers who have a revenue crop insurance policy or are enrolled in the ACRE program,

could potentially see a corn payment, especially if the price of corn drops more.

"The harvest price is likely going to be lower than the crop insurance base price, but potential indemnities could be offset by these really good yields sitting out in the fields," he said.

Technology Tools

Here are the technology tools I use. I encourage you to try them out, if you don't use them already. You never know, they might just be useful as they are to me!

Twitter – An online mini-blogging tool that lets you stay up-to-date with current events and items of interest from the people you follow.

Facebook – An interactive, multi-level tool to keep in touch with friends and family.

Google Calendar – An online calendar that allows you to check it anywhere at any time. Also, it allows you to share it with people you work with, so they can stay up-to-date with your status.

Skype – A great way to stay in touch with people far away.

Web Soil Survey – Allows you to download a color image of your field and overlay soil data. Also, you can measure distances and calculate acreage.

eXtension – A new online Extension service. You can ask questions about anything and get a response within a day, assuming the answer is not already listed. You can also participate in trainings offered on a host of different subjects.

tinyurl – A great way to shorten url's that you need to write down and keep track of.

For more information on what other technology there is out there, visit <http://tinyurl.com/yazmgtg> to find the "Top 20 Tech Tools."

Wheat Planting Considerations

With wheat planting season coming up very shortly, I wanted to give you all something to think about. This is for those of you who haven't made up your mind on if you are going to plant wheat and/or how much you plan on planting. Attached to this newsletter are two budgets with as close to relevant numbers as I can estimate. One is just for wheat and the other is for wheat/double-crop soybeans. If you are interested in using this budget with your own numbers, you can stop by anytime and we'll work through it. However, you can go on our website and under the "Ag & Natural Resources" tab, click on "Crops" and the link to this budget should be there.

The wheat only budget has been added here to show you what that crop will do by itself. According to the budget it will lose money and the soybeans will make up the difference. Let me know if you have any questions.



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