



North Country Ag Advisor

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North Country Ag Advisor

Cornell Cooperative Extension of
Clinton, Essex, Franklin,
Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence
Counties

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Our Mission

"The North Country Regional Ag Team aims to improve the productivity and viability of agricultural industries, people and communities in Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton, and Essex Counties by promoting productive, safe, economically and environmentally sustainable management practices, and by providing assistance to industry, government, and other agencies in evaluating the impact of public policies affecting the industry."

Field Crops and Soils

Alfalfa Seeding Rates Revisited

By Mike Hunter

I would like to take this opportunity to revisit alfalfa seeding rates. Alfalfa seeding rate studies have been done for decades and they all seem to be in agreement; for the Midwestern and Eastern United States, recommended alfalfa seeding rates are between 10 and 15 pounds per acre when seeded alone. When seeded with perennial grasses, alfalfa can be seeded at 8 to 12 pounds per acre. There are many farmers that believe these rates are too conservative and they tend to increase the seeding rates.

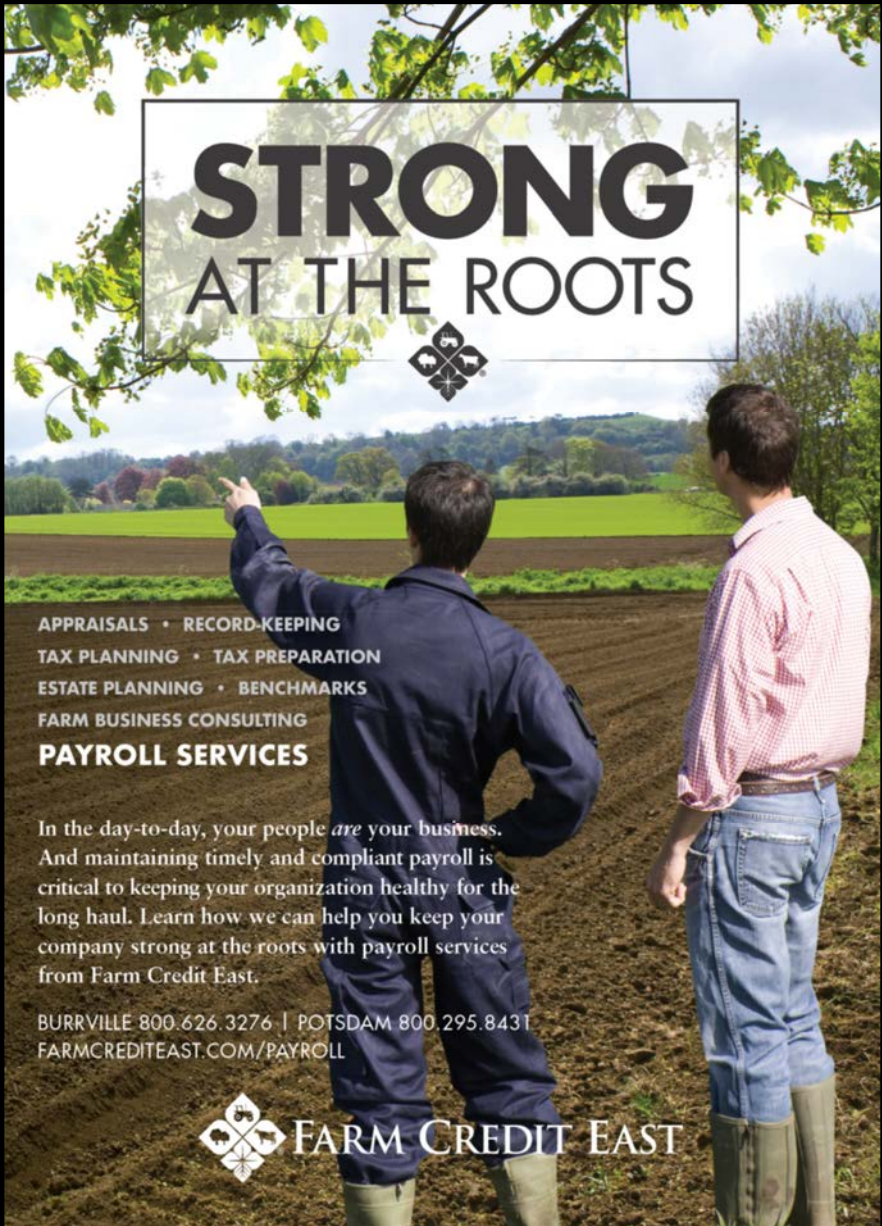
According to Dr. Dan Undersander, University of Wisconsin, higher seeding rates do not equate to higher yields. He tells growers that regardless of the seeding rate used, alfalfa will thin down to 30 to 35 plants by the end of the seeding year. He uses some basic math to illustrate why many alfalfa growers can reduce their alfalfa seeding rates and not sacrifice yield. Alfalfa planted at 1 pound per acre is about 5 seeds per square foot. At a seeding rate of 15 pounds per acre you will have 75 seeds per square foot. After emergence is completed in three or four weeks only about 45 alfalfa seedlings will be present. Using his example, it really puts alfalfa seeding rates into perspective.

Most agronomists will agree that an optimum alfalfa stand will have 20 to 35 plants per square foot in the establishment year. In the first production year an optimum stand will have 12 to 20 plants per square foot and 8 to 12 plants per square foot in the second production year.

It is my observation that alfalfa seeding rates vary drastically around our area. I have talked to some growers that plant more than 20 pounds of alfalfa with a perennial grass. Growers that have put the time and effort into preparing a good seedbed have no reason to use higher than recommended alfalfa seeding rates. With today's alfalfa seed prices above \$5 per pound, reducing seeding rates by two or three pounds can save growers \$10 to \$15 per acre.

Dr. Undersander has found that high alfalfa seeding densities actually provide too much competition among the young alfalfa seedlings. Alfalfa forage yield is not a function of plants per square foot in the establishment year, it is related to larger and more stems per square foot.

I would challenge you to take a closer look at your current alfalfa seeding rates that you are using on your farm. If you are a firm believer that 18 to 20 pounds of alfalfa per acre is necessary it might be well worth your time to check stand densities four weeks after planting and again at the end of the seeding year to see where your stand densities end up. If what Dr. Undersander suggests is true you should have about 30 to 35 plants at the end of the season. It would be very easy to experiment for yourself on your farm with a few strips of reduced alfalfa seeding rates within the same field and compare end of season plant densities.



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Key Opportunities to Optimize 2018 Crop Production Efficiency

By Joe Lawrence (PRO-DAIRY), Kitty O'Neil, Mike Hunter and Karl Czymmek (PRO-DAIRY)

Most farms routinely concern themselves with minimizing expenses and maximizing profits from both the animal and cropping parts of the operation, but these economic times have caused many to carefully peruse management plans to find some additional savings. It's always a good idea to avoid risky choices and to use sound, science-based information when planning management options. Here are some principles to guide springtime crop planning this year to minimize crop production input costs and risks.

Use your acres efficiently.

There are many fixed costs to farming an acre of land, regardless of the yield or quality harvested from it. Achieving higher yields and higher quality per acre will help control the overall cost of forage production. Focusing on meeting your forage needs on fewer acres may allow you to shed the cost of farming extra acres, or to add diversity with those extra acres with crop alternatives that may provide a better return. When developing a cropping plan, it is important to remember that each acre has inherent limitations to its yield potential based in soil type, location, drainage, etc. Spending money on extra inputs to try to push an acre or a field beyond its production potential can be as costly as managing below its potential.

Carefully consider crop varieties and seeding rates.

Numerous advancements in a crop's production potential (yield, quality, water and nutrient use efficiency and pest protection traits) have led to increased seed cost. Using available information to make accurate and efficient seed choices is a far better approach to seed cost control than evaluating seed price alone.

- Use only genetic traits that are needed on each field. The cost of weed or insect control traits in the seed, particularly with corn seed, contribute more to overall seed cost per acre than seeding rate or other factors. Corn Borer is not a big pest in NYS and is of particularly little concern on silage acres, so traits that control it are not likely to pay for themselves. Likewise, don't bother with Corn Rootworm protection on first year corn, but instead use it on 2nd year corn and beyond.
- Glyphosate-tolerant (or Roundup Ready) varieties are a worthwhile investment for fields with hard-to-control weeds, such as annual grasses, or in systems with cover crops or reduced/no tillage. In other fields, however, where weed populations are stable and may be routinely controlled with pre-emergence herbicide options, the odds of seeing a return on an investment in glyphosate-tolerant genetics is unlikely. A good understanding of

weed populations and a good pre-emergence herbicide program can help reduce this cost.

- Choose corn varieties with realistic maturity ranges. Longer-season varieties are expected to yield slightly more, but only if maturity is reached. The gamble on additional yield from a long season variety should be minimized.
- Double-check seeding rates and calibrate your planters. Reducing alfalfa seed from 20 to the recommended 12 lbs per acre can save more than \$30 per acre in seed cost (see [Alfalfa Seeding Rates Revisited](#) on page 3).
- Recommended corn planting rates vary with soil yield potential and range from 27,750 to 32,250 seeds per acre for grain and 31,000 to 37,750 per acre for silage. Follow company guidelines for specific hybrids. Many corn growers may be reluctant to change corn planting rates based on a particular hybrid and/or soil type because of the extra hassle it requires to make these planter adjustments. Any situation that allows a corn grower to reduce corn planting rates by 3,000 seeds per acre will reduce their seed cost by approximately \$10 per acre.

Manage tillage and equipment passes across the field.

Each tractor or truck trip across the field has a cost, in terms of fuel, time, and soil compaction, and some are more justifiable than others. Look for opportunities to reduce trips across the field without giving up production. Since a large percentage of the damage done by heavy equipment is done in its first pass over the soil, controlling traffic patterns can limit damage to laneways and headlands and help keep the rest of the field in better conditions.

Reduced and no-tillage methods can provide significant cost savings on top of tremendous benefits to soil health; however, quitting tillage 'cold turkey' can result in poor crop performance in that first growing season. Understanding the current conditions of your soils is critical to a successful transition. Attempting no-till on soils with poor structure and compaction issues will often produce less than desirable results as it will inhibit seed placement and root development until soil structure recovers.

Tillage can be a band-aid for imprecisely adjusted planting equipment and/or less than ideal soil conditions. In other words, a properly setup and operated planter that is designed for the field conditions you have will do its job placing seed correctly with less or with no tillage. Common advice from no-till farmers is to exercise patience and wait until conditions are correct to plant. While it may feel awkward to be sitting

home while neighbors are working land, the delay will permit you to plant faster and better once soil conditions are right.

Optimally capture manure and soil nutrients to reduce fertilizer needs.

An up-to-date soil test is cheap and valuable information. Soil fertility information allows you to focus nutrient inputs on acres where they're needed and where yield benefits and return per acre may be maximized. Accurately reduce fertilizer applications (take a credit) wherever it's possible.

- Take N credits for grass-legume sods and for soybeans in 1st year corn fields.
- Prioritize manure applications to 2nd and more year corn fields where N is most needed. Credit N fertilizer applications appropriately.
- Apply lime where the soil tests say it's most needed and where yield potential is highest. Correcting pH with lime takes time but pays big dividends in providing an optimal soil environment for the crop and making soil nutrients most available.

Evaluate real pest management needs.

Don't rely on one chemical control and definitely don't reduce application rates to save costs on pest management. Like any other year, it is critical to employ a pest control program that minimizes the risk of developing resistance, so repeatedly using a single mode of action or reducing rates below label is not advised. Instead, reduce pest management costs through scouting and integrated pest management (IPM) to assure that only proper ingredients and controls are used. Knowing the pest, its population, and the science of IPM will help to reduce unnecessary applications and unnecessary ingredients.

Before spending extra for insect control and herbicide tolerance traits in seed, be sure you have a reasonable expectation of a return on that additional cost. See previous discussion of seed and varieties.

Focus on timely and flexible forage harvest and storage.

Good management of end-of-season harvest is key to capitalizing on your cumulative, season-long efforts. Creating a specific harvest plan maximizes the likelihood of harvesting each feed at the desired quality, regardless of what the growing season throws at you.

First cutting hay or haylage provides a huge opportunity for good yields of high quality feed but does not need to make or break your year. Consider each acre of hay land, and each cutting, as an opportunity to harvest the highest quality feed you need on your farm. Beginning with first cutting, be prepared to harvest each acre at a high quality stage if weather and circumstances allow. When inventory of lactating quality feed is sufficient, turn your attention to

meeting the quality needs of other animal groups on the farm. Using this approach, high quality feed requirements are more likely to be met, leaving lower quality forages to be harvested when unforeseen weather and equipment challenges force delayed harvest.

Evaluate flexibility and potential to store forages in a way to allow access to forage lots at the right times for the right animal groups. If the ideal forage is buried at the back of the storage when you need to feed it, it has little value, and being forced to feed low quality forage to a highly productive animal group can be costly.

Forage shrink can also be very costly. Reduce shrink at the bunk by optimizing packing, matching forage delivery rate and packing tractor weights on bunks and drive-over piles, selecting the proper inoculant for each forage and proper coverage to exclude oxygen. Proper face management at feed out will also aid in minimizing losses.

Additional resources: *2018 Cornell Guide for Integrated Field Crop Management. Cornell University Cooperative Extension.*
<https://store.cornell.edu/p-199236-2018-cornell-guide-for-integrated-field-crop-management.aspx>



Residential Agricultural Discount Program

By Lindsay Ferlito

New York State is offering the Residential Agricultural Discount Program again this year. Submit your application by July 1, 2018, to start receiving a discount on your monthly energy bill starting in September. Remember, you must apply each year, so don't forget to reapply for 2018. To apply, fill out the application form (included here, or visit the websites below) and attach your Schedule F (Profit or Loss from Farming) or your IRS Form 1120, 1120S, or 1065 with one of the eligible business activity codes selected. For more information visit the websites for National Grid (<https://www.nationalgridus.com/agricultural-discount>) and NYSEG (<http://www.nyseg.com/resagriculturaldiscount/>).

Eligible activity codes for use from IRS Form 1120, 1120S, or 1065 submitted with your most recent tax return include:

Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting Crop Production

111100 - Oilseed & Grain Farming

111210 - Vegetable & Melon Farming (including potatoes & yams)

111300 - Fruit & Tree Nut Farming

111400 - Greenhouse, Nursery, & Floriculture Production

111900 - Other Crop Farming (including tobacco, cotton, sugarcane, hay, peanut, sugar beet, & all other crop farming)

Animal Production

112111- Beef Cattle Ranching & Farming

112112- Cattle Feedlots

112120 - Dairy Cattle & Milk Production

112210 - Hog & Pig Farming

112300 - Poultry & Egg Production

112400 - Sheep & Goat Farming

112510 - Aquaculture (including shellfish & finfish farms & hatcheries)

112900 - Other Animal Production

Forestry and Logging

113110 - Timber Tract Operations

113210 - Forest Nurseries & Gathering of Forest Products

113310 - Logging

Fishing, Hunting, and Trapping

114110 - Fishing

114210 - Hunting & Trapping

Residential Agricultural Discount

Customer Information: *(please print clearly)*

National Grid Account Number: _____ *(This number is located on the first page of your National Grid bill)*

Name: _____
Last Name First Name Middle Initial

Address: _____
City State Zip

Phone Number: _____ **Email Address:** _____

The Company will provide the Applicant with an acknowledgement copy of this application upon review and verification that the applicant is eligible to receive the RAD.

DECLARATION: *(please read and sign)*

I agree by signing this form that the proof provided to Niagara Mohawk, d/b/a National Grid qualifies me to receive the RAD discount. I understand that if I receive the discount without qualifying for it, I may be required to pay back the discount I received. I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of New York that the information I have provided in this application is true and correct.

Signature: _____
MM/DD/YYYY

Please submit your completed application and supporting documentation to National Grid via:

National Grid
Accounts Processing C-1
ResAgriculturalDiscount
300 Erie Blvd W
Syracuse, NY 13202
Fax: 315-477-7792



NYSEG 2017-2018 Residential Agricultural Discount Application Form

INSTRUCTIONS

- Complete all information requested on this form. Be sure to sign and date the application below. Make a copy of the completed application for your records.
- Attach to your completed application a copy of one of the following forms (supporting documentation) that you filed with your most recent federal tax return:
 - **IRS Schedule F - Profit or Loss From Farming**
 - Or, **Form 1120, 1120S or 1065** with one of the eligible Business Activity codes selected.

The above is an eligibility requirement.
- Submit your completed application and supporting documentation to NYSEG via:
 - Email at **ResAgriculturalDiscount@nyseg.com**; in the subject line enter your NYSEG 11-digit account number
 - Fax at **1.800.472.6409**
 - Mail to NYSEG, P.O. Box 5240, Binghamton New York 13902-5240, Attn: Back Office Billing
- You'll be notified via postal mail at the mailing address you provide below regarding your enrollment status. Please allow up to **3 months for processing**.
- If you have any questions about the program or application form, visit **nyseg.com**, click on "Your Home" or "Your Business" and then on "Residential Agricultural Discount" or contact us at **1.800.572.1111**, Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

**Residential
Agricultural
Discount Program**

SECTION 1 - CUSTOMER INFORMATION

NYSEG 11-Digit Account Number _____ Name on NYSEG Bill _____

Telephone (Mon. - Fri., 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.) _____ Other Telephone _____

Service Address _____ City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Mailing Address _____ City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
(If different from service address)

Email Address _____

Your email address will only be used to send you information regarding NYSEG's Residential Agricultural Discount program, weather conditions that may impact your electrical service, updates on reported outages, energy efficiency tips and information about NYSEG products and services. You can also sign up for NYSEG's email notification service by going to nyseg.com/mynotifications; read our privacy policy at nyseg.com/legaldisclaimer.html.

How did you first hear about the program? ☐ Farm Bureau ☐ NYPA ☐ NYSEG ☐ Other (Explain) _____

SECTION 2 - TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF RESIDENTIAL AGRICULTURAL DISCOUNT PROGRAM

These are the terms and conditions governing the contract with you for enrollment in the Residential Agricultural Discount program. This agreement is between NYSEG and you, the applicant. By signing this application, I acknowledge that I understand the following:

- > This year's program will be administered September 1, 2017, through August 31, 2018, with the monthly discount available until funding is no longer available through the New York Power Authority's (NYPA) Recharge NY program.
- > The discount amount will be calculated each month and will vary based on how many people participate, the amount of electricity used by each participant and available funds from the NYPA's Recharge NY program. The discount amount is then multiplied by my monthly billed kilowatt-hours and the discount will appear as a credit in a separate line item, "Res agricultural discount," under the "Electricity Delivery Charges" noted on page 3 of your bill. The credit will not exceed the net total monthly electricity delivery charges.
- > The 2017-2018 discount begins with meter readings on or after September 1, 2017, and that I must submit my application by July 1, 2017, to start receiving the discount in September 2017. If I apply after July 1, my application may not be processed until after the September 1, 2017, start date and need to allow up to 3 months for processing; the discount is not retroactive.
- > It's necessary to reapply every year by July 1 to determine continued eligibility and to start receiving the discount with the meter readings starting in September. Applications accepted after July 1 may not be processed until after the September 1 start date; allow up to 3 months for processing.

I also represent that all information included herein is accurate and true, and that any intentional misrepresentations may result in my disqualification from receiving the Residential Agricultural Discount and that I will be responsible for reimbursing NYSEG for any credits received.

Customer Acceptance of Terms and Conditions

Applicant Signature _____

Applicant Name (Please Print) _____ Date _____

If the above-noted applicant name is different from the name as it appears on the NYSEG bill, please state the relationship (i.e., business name, spouse, etc.): _____



COLLABORATIVE MARKETING

Date: April 17, 2018

Time: 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM

**Location: CCE Jefferson
County, 203 North
Hamilton Street,
Watertown, NY 13601**

Cost: FREE!

Topics Include:

- How to identify personal and logistical farm-based criteria for collaborative marketing
- How to identify potential collaborative marketing partners
- Evaluating collaborative relationships
- Learn what the NNY Food Hub is up to and how growers can participate

To Register, please visit

**[https://
reg.cce.cornell.edu/
CollaborativeMarket-
ing_10510](https://reg.cce.cornell.edu/CollaborativeMarketing_10510)**

**Contact: Lindsey Pashow
lep67@cornell.edu**

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Bulk Tank SCC - It's one cow or my whole herd

By Kimberley Morrill

In today's dairy market, striving for the highest milk quality tier helps the milk check and in turn helps pay the bills. As a producer starts to evaluate milk quality and set goals, it's important to start at square one. Where are we and what are our goals? Do we have a goal that was forgotten about?

Milk quality goals must be defined – who is going to create them? It's important that they are created by management with the input from milkers and the barn crew. This step allows for buy-in from employees. They feel valued and can provide some feedback as to current challenges that they are observing. Goals must reflect management priorities, provide steps (an action plan), and details of what will be evaluated (performance indicators). They should also include a timeline and be realistic. If you currently have a SCC of 400,000 it's not realistic to say our goal is to have a SCC of <100,000 within one month.

Goals must be defined by management

- With input from milkers and barn crew
- Clearly defined and measureable
- Defined, implemented, carried out, evaluated/analyzed

Goals reflect management's priorities

- Establishing well defined Key Performance Indicators

Make goals realistic

- Do not make the initial goal, the dream
- Recognize accomplishments along the way

Steps to goal setting:

1. Where are we today? When talking about milk quality we want to talk about:
 - a. Bulk tank SCC
 - b. Bacteria count
 - c. Cases of new mastitis each month (clinical)
 - d. New high SCC cows each month
 - e. Number of chronic mastitis cows
2. Once you know where you are today you can create your goals. One goal could be to have (and maintain) a bulk tank SCC of <125,000. Another goal could be to have <2% clinical mastitis cases/month. Base the goals on where you are today, and where you want to be.
3. Identify opportunities – what could be some of our challenges and how can we address them? When it comes to milk quality we have 4 focus areas, the cow, the environment, the equipment, and the milking routine.
4. Once we have identified our opportunity(s), it's time to come up with a game plan. What are we going to do differently? Maybe we identified our milking routine (or lack of routine) as being a challenge. We can create a protocol, do some employee training, and launch a new milking protocol that everyone follows.
5. Monitor progress – how are we going to evaluate if our changes are making things better or worse? What parameters are we going to evaluate and how often? Make this very clear. It's also important to monitor individual changes, so that we know what management practices help us, and which ones might not bring as much value to the table.
6. Set a timeline and be accountable. Put names and dates on paper.
 - a. Who is responsible for evaluating opportunity areas and creating an action plan?
 - b. When does this need to be completed?
 - c. Who is doing employee training, if needed?
 - d. Who is monitoring the goal and sharing progress along the way?
 - i. This is a key step. Are things going in the right direction?
 - ii. Post in the breakroom or on a parlor white board what the goal is, and where you are today.

Your action plan can be as detailed as you want it to be, but should include all key pieces and dates. You can add names and deadlines to specific action items, include dates of goal reviews, or any other information.

Where are we today?

What is our goal?

Identify opportunity

Implement plan of action

How are we going to monitor progress?

What is our timeline

Example Milk Quality Action Plan:

Where are you today? Bulk tank SCC 250,000.

What is your goal? Bulk tank SCC <150,000.

Identify opportunities:

No milking routine – everybody does something different.

What is the game plan?

Work with QMPS to develop a milking routine that fits our needs.

Hold employee trainings so that everyone is following the same routine.

Evaluation:

After employee training, all employees will be routinely evaluated either in person or via video monitoring. Re-training will occur as needed.

Timeline:

New milking protocol will be developed by April 1st.

Employee training will be completed by April 5th.

Reach SCC goal by June 1st and maintain through the next 6 months.

Reward

Pizza and wings once milking routine is consistent.

\$100 cash bonus each month the SCC is <125,000.



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Farm Business Management

Farm Finance 101

By Kelsey O'Shea

Ever wish you paid more attention in that accounting class? Maybe you're a bit rusty on financial ratios, or looking to learn something new. Each month I will go over an accounting or finance topic as it relates to your farm business, so stay tuned. This month is on tax terms:

- **Gross Farm Income** is the total of the following amounts from your tax return. This value is used in the calculation and tests for a number of federal and state credits.
 - Gross farm income from Schedule F (Form 1040)
 - Gross farm rental income from Form 4835
 - Gross farm income from Schedule E (Form 1040), Parts II and III
 - Gains from the sale of livestock used for draft, breeding, sport, or dairy purposes reported on Form 4797
- **Adjusted Gross Income** is defined as gross income minus adjustments to income. Adjustments to income reduce the amount of income you have that will be taxable.
 - Adjustments to income could include: IRAs, alimony, bad debt reduction, moving expenses, student loan interest, tuition and fees, and educator expenses.
- **Taxable Income** is adjusted gross income less the standardized or itemized deductions and exemptions. This is the number that your federal income tax is calculated from.

You must evaluate your particular situation to determine whether the standard or the itemized deductions is larger and then take the designated number of exemptions. Once federal income tax is calculated non refundable credits are applied, then any additional taxes (self employment tax, AMT, household employment tax, etc) are added back to arrive at your total tax, to which refundable credits are applied.

- **Refundable vs. non-refundable credits:** non-refundable credits will only detract from taxes owed, so you can only utilize the credit to the extent that there is tax owed. Refundable credits will detract from tax owed and any additional amount of credit left over is returned to you as a refund.





WHEN PLANTING GOES WRONG...



Prevented Planting & Replant Provisions in Crop Insurance 2018 Crop Year, NY

Crop insurance can help your farm recover from a crop failure. Did you know it can also help you manage risk at planting time? Most crop insurance policies include provisions that can compensate you if you are unable to plant or help you afford to replant your crop if necessary.

Prevented Planting

Prevented planting provisions in insurance policies can provide valuable coverage when extreme weather conditions prevent or delay planting.

Am I covered?

Most policies include a provision for prevented planting with the exception of group risk (GRP, GRIP, and ARPI) and catastrophic-level ("CAT") policies.



Eligibility

You may be eligible to file a claim if:

- Your acreage is physically available for planting
- Your acreage was planted in at least 1 of the 4 most recent crop years
- An insured cause of loss occurred within the insurance period, for example:
 - Excessively wet conditions throughout the growing season which prevented nearby producers from planting similar acreage
 - A specific event, like flooding, which impacted only your field
- You were unable to plant by the final planting date (see reverse) or during the late planting period (generally 25 days after the final planting date but varies)



So you were unable to plant, now what?

You must provide notice that you were prevented from planting an insured crop within 72 hours after you determine you will be unable to plant. Then you may choose to:

- Leave the acreage idle or plant a cover crop (and receive a full prevented planting payment as long as you do not hay or graze the cover crop before November 1),
- Plant the crop late (your original production guarantee applies but is reduced one percent per day for each day planting is delayed after the final planting date), OR
- Plant a second crop (you may receive a prevented planting payment equal to 35% of the prevented planting guarantee).



Payments

The prevented planting guarantee for most crops is typically 60% of the production guarantee purchased for timely planted acreage. Some policies have additional coverage options available.



Cornell University delivers crop insurance education in New York State in partnership with the USDA Risk Management Agency. Diversity and Inclusion are a part of Cornell University's heritage. We are an employer and educator recognized for valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities.



Final Planting Dates (NY)

5/10: Barley (spring), Oats (spring), Forage Seeding (spring), Onions
5/20: Green peas
5/30: Potatoes*
6/5: Tomatoes (processing)
6/10: Potatoes*, Corn, Soybeans

6/20: Grain sorghum, Sweet Corn (fresh-market)*
6/30: Sweet Corn (fresh-market)*, Dry Beans, Sweet Corn (processing)*
7/1 (previous year): Pasture and Hay

* Dates differ by county

7/10: Sweet Corn (processing)*
7/20: Cabbage
7/25: Green Beans (fresh and processing)
8/31: Forage seeding (fall)
9/30: Barley (winter)
10/10: Wheat (winter)

Replant

Replant provisions in insurance policies provide a payment to help producers replant after extreme weather destroys a planting.

Am I covered?

Most policies include a replant provision with the exception of group risk (GRP, GRIP, and ARPI) and catastrophic-level ("CAT") policies.



Eligibility

The acres to be replanted must be:

- Originally planted on or after the earliest planting date
- Either at least 20 acres total or 20% of the insured planted acreage (whichever is less - this is known as the "20/20 Rule")
- Affected by an insured cause of loss such as a late frost
- Appraised as having an expected yield below 90% of the guaranteed yield in your policy
- Determined to be "practical to replant" by an Authorized Crop Insurance Adjuster
- Replanted with the original crop



So your planting was destroyed, now what?

- Notify your crop insurance agent within 72 hours
- An adjuster will appraise your expected yield and whether it is practical to replant
- If applicable, replant with the original crop
- Your original planting guarantee will continue as if nothing had happened (as long as you plant before the final planting date)

Earliest Planting Dates (NY)

4/1: Cabbage
4/11: Corn
4/21: Grain Sorghum
4/30: Soybeans
5/1: Beans (dry)
5/15: Tomatoes (processing)
5/25: Green beans (fresh)

Payments

The replant payment is typically equal to the lesser of either your actual costs of replanting or a formula provided in your crop insurance policy provisions (for example: for corn, the per-acre replant payment equals the projected price/bushel x 8 bushels).



Communicate regularly with your agent about any issues with your crop, especially before planting deadlines! This is essential for receiving prevented planting or replanting payments.

Top 3 Considerations for Value-Added

By Anika Zuber

I receive many questions from individuals looking to add value to their milk. Ideas range from bottling their own milk to making a cultured dairy product. One of the first questions asked is how much capital investment it is going to take to start a project like this. While this is a critical question when starting a business, what many people do not consider is the other hidden costs associated with actually operating a value-added dairy business. Food safety is a topic that new processors don't typically think about right off the bat. Here are my top 3 things to consider when looking into value-added dairy processing:

1. Time spent *not* making product

This sounds obvious, but often times the time it takes to get things done on a value-added dairy operation is underestimated. If you have a farm or have another full-time job and are planning to keep doing that job while starting a processing plant, then you need to add someone to your team, and that means adding someone to payroll. Actual processing time can vary depending on how big a plant is, what the product is, and how smoothly things go overall on a day-to-day basis. However, there is more to having a dairy processing business than just making the product. Who is going to do the extensive cleaning and sanitizing of the facility? Who is going to do the marketing and distribution of the product so that your business can reach its critical mass? Who is going to do the documentation essential for operating a licensed dairy facility? These things take time and are all crucial to building a successful value-added dairy. Marketing and documentation are 2 things that are typically overlooked when assigning roles and responsibilities of a value-added business. Even venues such as farmers' markets take hours of time and a person to oversee a booth the entire time. When I ask processors the question, "what do you know now that you wish you knew before?" they often say they had no idea how much time they would spend trying to sell their product to customers or retailers. New businesses should not solely rely on the ideology, "if you build it, they will come".

2. Food safety

Have you seen an increase in the amount of food recalls over the past few years? If so, you may think to yourself, "is our food supply getting less safe"? The

answer is no. The truth of the matter is that technology has allowed us to be able to link food borne illness back to the source much more efficiently using DNA fingerprinting to match specific strains back to their point source. Therefore, testing of a product or an investigation of a facility could lead to linking an identical pathogen to an ill patient. We did not have this technology as readily available years ago. Now, there is a database through the CDC called PulseNet that helps track outbreaks, identify clusters of folks who are sick from the same or similar ailment, and helps the CDC work with other agencies such as the FDA to identify where the outbreak is coming from (<https://www.cdc.gov/pulsenet/about/index.html>). Why does this matter? No food processor has the goal of making a product that harms people, and it benefits the public overall to always be producing safer food. However, food processors need to be more preventive and vigilant than ever. Facility-specific food safety plans are required for most facilities and are a living document. They take time, diligence, and effort.

3. Operating costs that you don't think about

We already mentioned things like documentation and marketing that take time and money. There are also other types of costs that aren't directly associated with labor that can make a big difference. One method food processors implement (and are sometimes required to implement) in order to prevent a food safety issue is Pathogen Environmental Monitoring (PEM). This means that processors will swab locations throughout the facility and send the samples off to a *certified* lab using *approved methods* to test them for bacteria such as *Listeria* or *Salmonella*. If something is found, the area should be intensely cleaned, sanitized, and re-tested to make sure it is no longer an issue. The goal of a PEM program is to seek, find and destroy any harmful bacteria before it ends up in product. Typically plants swab several areas weekly or monthly (depending on the size and condition of the facility). There is a cost for each swab, and building a robust PEM program can become expensive when there are multiple swabs done on a regular basis. There have been cases of facilities that have been doing PEM, but in effort to save money

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they have sent their product to a lab that wasn't certified or wasn't using the appropriate method for detecting pathogens. Because of this, they never knew they had an issue until it was too late. They ended up having contaminated product, and this upfront cost prevented nothing.

The point here is that food safety is a priority and can make or break a business. If a facility is found to be irresponsible, it can be catastrophic to consumers, the business, and its owners. Food safety planning and monitoring takes time, effort, and *investment*. Food safety costs such as PEM and other testing and labor time commitments should be built into a company's operating budget.

There have been many examples of successful value-added dairy businesses in New York State. We have over 360 value-added dairy businesses across the NY; this number has increased over the last 5 years because consumers want options and are more interested in food than ever. This represents exciting opportunities for new businesses and dairy products. We want to see new dairy businesses flourish here in New York State and have the information they need to be successful. Successful business operators have dedicated time and money toward training themselves or their employees on both production know-how and all the nuances of the value-added dairy business such as the importance of food safety programs and marketing. Do not plan your value-added dairy business without considering these 3 major factors.



Working with Your USDA Meat Processor

By Mackenzie Waro

We have all heard it or said it, “My butcher screwed up my order”, “My butcher will not use my personal cut sheet”, “I cannot get the slots I want”, or “I have to schedule 6 months out; I don’t even have the animal yet!” How can you work with your butcher to get what you need? Maybe if we work together the problems will be resolved. The New York and New England Packing Plant Survey is complete and here are a few things we have found by talking to over 80% of the USDA red meat packing plants in New York, New England, and Pennsylvania.

Meat pick up time: Pick up your meat on-time and pay at pick up. Keeping your meat at the plant creates a bottleneck; freezer space is limited and the product needs to be moved quickly. Some plants may impose a surcharge on your product, meaning if you do not pick up your finished product on-time the plant may charge an additional fee or could even give the product away. If you are having problems picking up the product, or paying for the service, you must call the plant and let them know the problems. Many of the plants are willing to work with you but they need you to be honest with them.

Busy time of year: Over half of the plants are extremely busy from September to early January. Many plants start to book fall slots the previous fall. Even if you have slots one fall, it does not guarantee slots for the following fall. Producers must call early, sometimes even in the spring, to set up slot appointments.

Number of animals: Bring the correct number of animals. If you say you are going to bring 3 beef cattle, bring 3 beef cattle. If you know you are only bringing 2 out of the 3 animals, call the plant days ahead of the appointment. This will give the plant time to find another animal to fill that slot. If you bring 4 instead of 3, you may push the plant into overtime with the USDA and you are now responsible for paying the USDA inspector overtime pay.

Cut sheets: Three-quarters of plants request that the producer use the plant’s cut sheet. If you are confused by the cut sheet, the plant owner/manager is more than willing to sit down with you and go over the sheet. The plant wants the correct sheet just as much as you want the correct cuts. A wrong cut of meat can be very costly to the plant and could hurt their reputation among producers. Work with your plant to make sure the cut sheet is legible and filled out accurately to both you and the plant’s standards

Creating a meat label: Many plants will help producers create a custom meat label. This may come in the form of the plant changing the name and logo out on the plant’s machine to giving you the name of a custom printer who can help to create a colorful, glossy, eye appealing label. Some plants may impose a charge to change out the label and you need to talk to the plant before creating your own meat label. There are many rules and guidelines to creating a meat label and these rules must be strictly adhered to for a USDA meat label.

It is very important to work with your butcher and the plant. The plant is under the jurisdiction of the USDA and must follow federal laws and regulations. The USDA has the final say on each and every animal that goes through the federally inspected plant. If you have a question, ask the owner/manager. They want the product to be safe and correct for the end consumer, just like you as the producer does. Producers and processors make a great team when they work together. We are all in it to create a good, wholesome, and safe product for the consumer.



Labor

By Sara Bull, CCE Clinton County

Many of my recent conversations with farmers have been about labor, employee engagement and motivation on farms. These topics were also discussed at the recent Northeast Dairy Producers meeting in Syracuse, NY. One of the speakers put up a slide highlighting Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. I really enjoy this simple explanation to show basic employee needs.

It's not a secret anymore that farmers in Northern New York are tight on cash right now, so we'll discuss the needs of employees, and ways to motivate them that don't include raises. Theoretically, if you as a farm owner/manager are meeting these needs, turnover should be low. You should have happy, healthy, AND productive employees.

Picture a pyramid, and at the wide bottom of the pyramid are physiological needs. These are basic needs that include food, water, air, etc. Hopefully your employees have these needs covered, but if they don't (ex. there isn't enough food to feed themselves or their family) they will be preoccupied with fulfilling these needs before they will ever focus on the job at hand.

Once the basic physiological needs are met, people look to fulfill safety needs. The more dangerous the job, the more likely the employee is to leave for another occupation that is safer and more secure. Check to make sure the area in which your employees work makes them feel safe. An important note is that this does not just include physical safety, but also mental safety. Unless your employees are living under a rock, they know you are struggling. There is a possibility that knowing this has them fearing for their job. Will you be downsizing your labor force? Several farmers have recently said layoffs are not an option and they value their employees more than anything else, but do your employees know this? Tell them.

Next comes social and love needs. This has a lot to do with relationships outside of work, but one area a manager can focus on is to promote team work and encourage social interaction within the workplace. When employees are connecting with their co-workers they are more engaged and motivated to perform.

Once those needs are met, the ability to

move on to esteem needs is created. Esteem needs are self-respect based on achievement, co-workers' opinions, status, recognition, and appreciation. One way for a manager to encourage these esteem needs are met is to praise employees for a job well done. Do this often and use specific examples. If you think you are praising someone too much, I can almost guarantee you that you are not. This also comes in handy when you are giving negative feedback. Research has found that the brain responds best to five positive feedback messages for every negative message so keep that in mind when giving feedback as a whole.

Once the employees' esteem needs are met, they can move on to the top of the pyramid, self-actualization. This level is where true fulfillment and personal development take place. The employee will try to perform to the best of their abilities and should be given challenging assignments from their manager. Giving an employee a project to work on that they can have some control over instead of just giving them a task to complete should help motivate them to own the project and feel fulfilled.

Keeping employees engaged and motivated during tough times is hard. Let's face it, it's hard to keep yourself engaged at times. Staying positive and reminding yourself and your employees why the work you're doing matters will help everyone continue to be productive. As a last comment I will recommend Simon Sinek's book, "Start with Why." This book can help inspire you to achieve more and push those around you to do the same. When the needs of your employees are met and everyone understands the "Why," motivation is higher and performance increases.

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