

MICHIGAN STATE
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EXTENSION



News and Notes

Clinton County MSU Extension and Conservation District

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Events & Happenings

Progressive Farmer Meeting – March 14, 8:00 a.m. at Smith Hall. Topic - Identifying Risk – Protecting Profits. RSVP to 989-224-5240.
Clinton Conservation District Annual Meeting – March 25, 6:00 p.m. at Smith Hall. RSVP by March 14 to 989-224-3720x3.
Central Michigan Ag Labor Meeting – March 31, 8:30 a.m. at RESA in St. Johns. RSVP by March 17 to 989-224-5240.
CD Tree Sale – March 28 orders due. Forms available at [Clinton CD Website](#) or the Clinton CD Office.
CD Board Meeting – April 22, 8:00 a.m. at the USDA Service Center, St. Johns.
Field Risk Assessment Training – April 22, 9:00 a.m. Clinton County Courthouse, St. Johns. RSVP by April 14 to 989-224-3720x3. CCA credits requested.
Horses & the Environment – May 3, 12:30 p.m. at Maple Valley High School Cafeteria, Vermontville, MI. RSVP by April 25 to 517-543-5848.

New Face at the NRCS office

There's a new face at USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Jean Gagliardo has joined the Clinton County Service Center as Soil Conservationist. She is replacing Tim Redder who has moved to the Michigan State office to manage the State's Wetland Reserve Program.

Jean has spent the last 8 years in St. Joseph, Kalamazoo, and Allegan counties working with the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program and more recently with the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program. She is excited about the additional opportunities that NRCS affords her to assist Clinton County land owners with their natural resource and conservation needs. Please introduce yourself when you see her. She is looking forward to working with all of you.

Identifying Risk – Protecting Profits

Marilyn Thelen, MSU Extension

Excitement, anticipation, fear, risk – these are all words that describe what is happening in the farm economy this year. We are seeing record high prices for corn, wheat and soybeans. Input costs are rising and availability of product may be variable. So, how do you plan in a time when the market movement are not following the fundamentals and the cost to go to the field this spring is escalating?

The Progressive Farmers have put together a great program on Identifying Risk – Protecting Profits. Join us for a discussion with farm management and market experts Dr. Jim Hilker, MSU, Ken Swanson, Partner SLF Grain, Inc. and Dennis Stein, MSU Extension. Learn risk management strategies that could be put to work on your farm.

The meeting is March 14 from 8:00 a.m. to noon at Smith Hall. Lunch is provided after the meeting for a \$5.00 donation. Please RSVP to 989-224-5240.

Central Michigan Ag. Labor Meeting

Kelly Kackley, MSU Extension

Understanding and complying with Farm Labor Laws has become increasingly more difficult due to the changes in the laws and number of issues facing farm employers. MSU Extension along with the Mid Michigan and Capital Area Migrant Resource Councils are holding the first annual Central Michigan Ag. Labor Meeting at RESA in St. Johns on March 31st. The day long event begins at 8:30 with registration and the program runs from 9:00 a.m to 4:00 p.m. Session on successful recruiting, farm labor housing, and an update from Immigration and Customs Enforcement will be held in the morning. The afternoon tract will be the Farm Preparedness Series, which offers the opportunity for 2 pesticide recertification core credits. The cost of the conference is \$20, and includes materials and lunch. To register or for more information, please contact MSU Extension at 989-224-5240.

Clinton Conservation District Annual Meeting

Gary Fritz, Clinton CD

Annual Meeting – Tuesday, March 25th at 6 pm
Smith Hall, Clinton Co. Fairgrounds, St. Johns

Election of Directors • Conservationist of the Year Award

Featured Presentation: Fishing in Mid-Michigan Streams and Rivers

Jim Bedford, Award Winning Author and Photographer

Dinner will be provided – RSVP's appreciated by March 14th
989-224-3720, ext. 3 or info@clintonconservation.org

Horses and the Environment

Jean Gagliardo, NRCS

Horse owners both suburban/urban and rural, face many management issues do to close proximity to neighbors and the typically smaller acreage of horse farms that can intensify environmental and liability problems. Join us Saturday, May 3, for a comprehensive program on Horses and the Environment. Registration begins at noon and the program is from 12:30 – 6:30 p.m. at the Maple Valley High School Cafeteria in Vermontville.

Topics that will be covered are Right to Farm and the MAEAP Program, Pasture Management & Toxic Plants, Water & Manure Don't Mix, Horse Health Issues. In addition you can meet local resource people and learn about potential cost-share opportunities from NRCS through the Farm Bill. In addition, there will be hands-on break out groups where resource people will be available to answer your farm specific questions, and assist with development of Grazing Plans, Manure Management Plans, and Emergency Planning for your operation. .

There is a \$15.00 per person or \$20.00 per farm fee (one set of handouts per farm). Please RSVP April 25 by calling the Eaton Conservation District at 517-543-5848.

For more information contact Kim at: kim.walton@mi.nacdnet.net or Jean at jean.gagliardo@mi.usda.gov or call the Eaton Conservation District.

Farm Land Rental

Dennis Stein, MAU Extension, District Farm Management

Some tips that seem to make the difference, in many cases, how successful farm land renters are with building a positive working relation with there landlords and keeping that relation a win- win situation for both parties. One of the most often noted reasons for changing renters is “He didn’t care about me anyway!”. One of the most common reasons noted by a landlord to refuse a new renters offer is, “He has always treated me fairly and been a good steward of the farm and community!”.

In many cases renters that have multi-year agreements have taken the time and effort to share just a little extra effort and in some cases some of the profits to maintain a strong Win – Win relationship.

Renter Check list:

- _____ 1. Do you have a well written rental agreement? (Suggest NCR 76 available at you local MSU Extension office.) or click on [Rental Agreements](#)
- _____ 2. Have you talked to your landlord, show some interest in them.
- _____ 3. Provide the landlord some information about their farm like crop history with yields and how that compares to other farms in the area and other land that you farm. This helps them better understand the value of there land in comparison to other parcels.
- _____ 4. You may want to provide some cost of production information to help the landlord see the impact of higher energy and inputs on the bottom line.
- _____ 5. In some cases you can offer crop share option that reflects the farms production index and crop rotation. (The standard 1/3 - 2/3 of the crop may need some serious fixing in today’s situation, today the % has shifted or the landlord needs to help cover some of the costs.)
- _____ 6. Would you custom farm the acres for the landlord if they feel that they are not making enough money? If so have a number in mind for what you would charge him to recover your overhead and time value and allow the landlord the option to take the production and price risk. Be sure you number covers the services that you will be committing to do for the landlord in a custom farming situation. (Who purchases inputs, when will you be paid, cover all tillage and other machine work, trucking and storage are costs, and marketing cost.)
- _____ 7. Pay attention to Life Events for the landlord and their families; a card or note now and then can pay big benefits later; also pay attention to the next generation of owners as some point in time you will have to do business with them as well. Burnt bridges sometimes are never rebuilt.
- _____ 8. Soil stewardship, taking care of the land is a point that you can share with the landlord. Good soil testing program, fertilization and positive weed control programs are often appreciated by the older generation.
- _____ 9. Help landlord understand risk or provide the option to have them share in some of the risk related to crop production.

Wheat fungicide label changes for 2008

Diane Brown-Rytlewski, Michigan State University, Department of Plant Pathology

By now, many of you may have heard that a section 18 registration for Folicur and generic tebuconazoles will not be available for fusarium head blight (FHB, head scab) this year. Last year, there were three tebuconazoles available (Folicur, Muscle, Embrace) under a Section 18 emergency label for Fusarium head blight. Why no tebuconazole this year? A section 18 label is for an emergency situation where no effective alternative is available. Folicur was the best product commercially available until last year, but it did not have a regular label (Section 3). This year, an effective alternative with a regular label Proline (prothioconazole) is available. It came on the market in 2007, just ahead of the time period when fungicides for FHB are commonly applied. In addition to FHB, the Proline label for wheat lists septoria leaf blight and stagonospora glume blotch, rust and most recently, powdery mildew (supplemental 2ee label). Proline may be applied up to Feekes 10.5.2 (50% flowering) and has a 30 day preharvest interval. Proline is considered to be more effective at suppressing FHB and lowering DON levels than Folicur.

Tilt is the only other product in Michigan this year labeled for FHB. The Tilt label has recently been changed to allow for application up to Feeke’s 10.5.2. Tilt is a very effective product for wheat foliar diseases, including powdery mildew, septoria, stagonospora, and rust, but has been rated as less effective than Folicur for FHB in multistate, multiyear University trials. Tilt has a preharvest interval of 40 days.

Two wheat bulletins; Management of Fusarium Head Blight (Scab) and Management of Foliar Wheat Disease, have been revised for 2008 and are available on the [Field Crops AoE website](#)

Frost-Seeded Red Clover Recycles Manure Nutrients and More

MSU Extension Release

How do free nitrogen, manure nutrient recycling, decreased risk of manure runoff and improved soil quality sound? What if you could achieve all these with one simple practice? Even better? Try frost-seeding red clover into wheat.

Frost-seeding red clover into wheat fields offers many advantages, especially for farmers who are planning to haul manure onto the wheat stubble later. When livestock producers spread manure following wheat harvest, they find hard, dry ground that can have cracks that make tile drains vulnerable to liquid manure. In addition, nitrogen volatilizes in the hot weather. These conditions can be improved by seeding any cover crop, but frost-seeding red clover has multiple benefits and minimal costs. When manure is also applied in the fall, winter or early spring, red clover increases the chances for capturing the manure nitrogen and recycling it to the following crop. As nitrogen and all fertilizer prices remain high, this will more than pay for the seeding costs.

“Red clover can be frost-seeded by broadcasting it onto wheat fields before spring thaw,” says Natalie Rector, Michigan State University (MSU) Extension nutrient management field specialist. “The clover will be spindly at wheat harvest, but soon after the wheat is taken off, the red clover fills in.”

As it grows, the clover takes up the manure’s nutrients. As the plants’ taproots grow, they improve soil structure. By fall, the red clover will be established enough to protect the soil against erosion from wind and rain. A short-term perennial, red clover will survive the winter for continued soil quality benefits. In the spring, it can be controlled by plowing or spraying before planting either corn or sugar beets to benefit from its nitrogen potential. Red clover is a legume that fixes nitrogen. When used as a cover crop, it will take up nitrogen in the soil and recycle applied manure nutrients for use by the following crop.

“We’ve found red clover can offer as much as 100 pounds of nitrogen credit in the spring,” says Dale Mutch, MSU Extension specialist. “The later the clover is allowed to grow in the spring, the more nitrogen potential. That makes this cover crop especially attractive ahead of corn or other crops that are heavy nitrogen users.”

There are several options for frost-seeding red clover. Mark Seamon, Saginaw County MSU Extension educator, has conducted on-farm demonstrations on seeding red clover for several years. Participating farmers in his area have found three successful seeding methods that have not affected wheat yields: using an electric spinner seeder mounted on the back of an ATV, blending red clover seed with urea and broadcasting it onto frozen soil, and drilling the seed as early as it’s possible to drive over wheat in spring.

Seeding should be completed as close as possible to the last winter frost. Frosty mornings allow for driving over the field and create alternating freezing and thawing that helps put the seed in contact with the soil. Red clover tolerates cool conditions, so early planting gives the seed access to early season soil moisture that encourages germination. An unseasonably dry spring may hinder red clover establishment.

“Farmers have seeded at rates anywhere between 6 and 10 pounds per acre,” Rector says, “but 10 to 15 pounds may provide more consistent stands.” Red clover seed generally costs between \$1 and \$1.50 per pound. Medium red clover (also called June clover) and Michigan Mammoth have both been used successfully. Be sure to inoculate the red clover seed ahead of planting.

For more information on maximizing nutrients in field cropping systems, visit [The Rootzone website](#).

Ice Sheeting on Wheat

Martin Nagelkirk, MSU Extension

Throughout much of the region, there has been concern over the effect of ice sheeting on winter survival. My understanding is that ice sheeting limits oxygen and, therefore, wheat's ability to respire. It also causes the buildup of potentially toxic levels of carbon dioxide, ethylene and methanol.

Winter injury due to ice sheeting is not unusual in Michigan, but this winter it has been of greater concern as repeated and large doses of precipitation, in the form of rain and snow, has been coupled with wide swings in temperatures. The result has been persistent flooding and/or ice sheeting.

Unfortunately, the adverse effect of ice sheeting and low temperature flooding are similar and probably cumulative. Also, repeated periods of limited gas exchange throughout the winter months may weaken the plants' tolerance with each prolonged exposure.

On the more optimistic side, wheat is still very dormant so its respiration level is low and probably can survive for a couple weeks below the solid ice. Also, it is encouraging that ice in some fields is porous or fractured, as this is all that is necessary for sufficient gas exchange.

There is a reasonable inclination to try to break up the ice. This could potentially be helpful as long as there is not standing water below it. Although rarely possible, draining water that sets above or below the ice could also be beneficial.

As always, there is no easy way to accurately predict the degree to which wheat has been damaged, and we will need to wait and see until the weeks following initial green-up.

Fall 2007 Yellow Wheat Verdict

Marilyn L. Thelen, MSU Extension

Last fall questions on winter wheat were coming in on a regular basis. What was causing it and why the odd patens in fields?

Wheat tissue and field soil samples were taken in good and poor areas of fields in Clinton, Gratiot, Tuscola and Saginaw counties. In all sample but one, a low level of available nitrogen was found in both the good and poor samples. The exception was a Clinton County field that had good looking wheat in the wheel tracks and yellowing wheat in the rest of the field. The wheat that was yellow had low available N, similar to the other samples. The wheat from the wheel track had 5 times more available N. This would explain the green color, but why in the wheel tracks? I spoke with other Extension Educators who have seen the same thing in previous years. They concluded that the wheel tracks provided a soil structure that allowed for more capillary action and kept the moisture in the rootzone. More moisture and more N makes for greener wheat!

Samples were also analyzed for Barley Yellow Dwarf. No disease was found. Spring N application should improve the nutrient profile for the fields that had yellowing wheat.

Summary of Nitrogen Wheat Studies 2004 to 2007

Darryl Warncke, MSU, Department of Crop and Soil Sciences

Summary: Across the years of these Nitrogen (N) material and rate studies, top wheat yields were produced with 60 or 90 lbs N/a, depending on year. Averaged over the four years 90 lbs N/a resulted in 1.6, 1.0 and 2.2 bu/a more yield than 60 lbs N/a for urea, UAN and ESN. Split topdress N applications between green up and Feekes 6 improved grain yield both years this was done. Spring application of the slow release N material ESN resulted in yields equal to or better than the other N materials; urea, ammonium sulfate or UAN. In 2 of 3 years fall applied ESN resulted in grain yields fairly comparable to the other N materials topdressed in the spring. In comparing yields with urea or UAN to yields with ammonium sulfate, in only one year was there any indication of a potential benefit from the additional sulfur.

Details of the study are available by contacting MSU Extension at 989-224-5240 or e-mail your request to thelen22@msu.edu.

Conservation...Our Purpose, Our Passion

Jason M. Kimbrough, NRCS District Conservationist

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has launched a new campaign entitled "Conservation...Our Purpose, Our Passion. The goal of this new campaign is to highlight and reinforce all the ways cooperative conservation supports our national conservation priorities, such as cleaner air, more productive cropland, cleaner and more abundant water, improved wildlife habitat, and to inform the public of all the benefits that agriculture provides. This campaign also highlights NRCS's pivotal role and contributions in delivering technical assistance and other services that get conservation on the ground, which is the real measure of our success as an agency.

To read and watch a video about our featured agricultural customers, their success stories and our dedicated NRCS employees, please visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>.

If you have any questions about how NRCS and our local partners can help with conservation related issues on your agricultural operation in Clinton County, Please give us a call at 989-224-3720 x 3

MSU Biofuel Research: Can Cellulosic Ethanol Crops Enhance Conservation?

Lauren Bailey, MSU

Cellulosic ethanol production promises greatly increased energy efficiency and could be a win-win for farmers, soil and water conservation, wildlife, and the environment. Michigan State University researchers are examining how different biofuels crops may affect conservation outcomes. They are studying the impact of potential biofuels crops on song and game bird numbers, beneficial insects, and soil microbes. They are currently looking for sites throughout southern Michigan to conduct these studies. Ideal sites would have a pure (or nearly pure) stand of switchgrass, a mixed grass and wildflower planting (for example a mixed prairie, CRP or Pheasants Forever type planting) and a nearby conventional corn field. Ideally, each would be at least 5 acres in size and within 2 miles of each other. The switchgrass and mixed prairie stands should be well established, i.e. at least 3 years old. From May to October a small team of researchers will periodically visit each site to survey bird, insect and soil microbe communities. They anticipate about 12 visits to each field during the year. All information will be kept confidential and landowners will not be identified without prior permission. If you or someone you know has questions about the project or might be interested in participating, please contact Lauren Bailey (517) 432-5282 e-mail: bailey65@msu.edu.

2008 Spring Tree Sale

John Switzer, District Forester

Order forms are now available for the Clinton Conservation District's 2008 Spring Tree Sale. A wide variety of bare root seedlings and transplants will be available for purchase this spring. Whether you have been thinking about putting in a windbreak, attracting more wildlife, or just have some empty space in your yard you want filled, now is a great time to get affordable seedlings in the quantities you need. Spring is one of the best times to plant trees once the danger of frost has past. Both coniferous and deciduous trees can be planted during this time as trees are still dormant and stress from planting is minimized.

In addition to the many conifers, hardwoods, and shrubs we typically offer, three new species have been added this year. One new addition, the Sawtooth Oak, is one of the fastest growing trees when young. It grows well in almost all soils, requires full sunlight, and its dark green foliage turns golden brown in the fall. Because it grows so fast when young, sawtooth oak produces acorns at a younger age than most other oaks. A favorable food source in fall and winter, the acorns are sought by many wildlife species, especially wild turkey.

Another new addition, the Flaming Maple, is a very attractive landscape tree. A smaller tree reaching only 20', the flaming maple is suitable for any soil type. It is a very hardy tree being both cold tolerant and drought resistant. As the name suggests, flaming maple leaves turn a brilliant, fiery red in the early fall.

River Birch, another new addition this year, is a popular landscape tree as well. It has attractive salmon colored bark that peels away from the trunk freely. Although this tree does well in wet areas and along river banks, it also grows well in upland sites. Requiring full sunlight, river birch trees can grow up to 70' tall.

Tree sale forms can be found on the [Clinton CD Website](#) or picked up at the Conservation District office. Orders will be ready for pick up on April 11th and 12th at Peck Hall, in the Clinton County Fairgrounds in St. Johns. More information about tree planting is available by calling the district at (989) 224-3720 ext 3. Tickets are also available for the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) Think Green Raffle. MACD is raffling off a brand new 2008 E-85 Chevy Silverado 4x4 Crew Cab Pickup. Tickets can be purchased at the Clinton Conservation District and at the tree sale pick up.

SOYBEAN GROWERS CAN FIND HELP IN THE STARS THROUGH NEW RESEARCH INITIATIVE

Dave Pratt, MSU Extension

EAST LANSING, Mich. -- With today's market prices, even small yield increases can have a big impact on an operation's bottom line. To help soybean growers explore new avenues for increasing production, the Michigan Soybean Checkoff Program will sponsor strip testing at regional sites (STARS) for the 2008 growing season.

STARS was designed as a tool to identify and evaluate new production practices both regionally and statewide through scientific research conducted across Michigan's soybean growing areas.

David Pratt, Tuscola County Michigan State University (MSU) Extension agriculture educator, will coordinate the program. He will work with MSU Extension educators across the state to identify potential sites for on-farm studies.

“Once we’ve identified farmers who are interested in cooperating in our studies, I’ll work with them to collect data from their yield monitors,” Pratt says. “We’ll evaluate the data at MSU to determine whether the production practice tested actually results in a higher economic return. Eventually, we hope to look at a number of production practices that may be specific to a particular region or all of the soybean growing areas in Michigan.”

For its inaugural year, Pratt and his collaborators at the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee plan to address one treatment across the state: application of a foliar fungicide at the R3 growth stage. The study will explore whether this practice contributes to better plant health by preventing foliar leaf disease and results in higher soybean yield.

Farmers interested in participating in the 2008 STARS study can contact Pratt at the Tuscola County MSU Extension office by calling 989-672-3870 or e-mailing prattda@msu.edu.

The STARS program was developed to help Michigan growers increase soybean production profitability. Funding is provided by the Michigan Soybean Checkoff Program in cooperation with MSU Extension and the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee.

Field Crop Advisory Team Alert newsletter starts March 20

The *Field Crop Advisory Team (CAT) Alerts* consist of 18 issues each season: most issues are published during the growing . **The price for a mail subscription is \$35.** Print this linked form ([a pdf form](#) 30 kb) to subscribe and receive the printed/mailed version of the newsletter.

Internet readers can sign up here at the web site to receive an e-mail message each time a new issue is posted ([instructions](#)). The *Field Crop CAT Alert* **begins its annual publishing season March 20.**

The *Field Crop Advisory Team (CAT) Alert* newsletter is your connection to the experts at Michigan State University. During the busy growing season, the *CAT Alert* newsletter provides timely pest management information based on current conditions. You get insect, disease and weed management recommendations; regional reports on crop growth and pest status; weather reports with growing degree day data; and pesticide registration updates. We also include soil fertility advice and connect with MSU [Diagnostic Services](#).

2007 Michigan sentinel plot review

Jan Byrne, [Diagnostic Services](#)

Over 125 samples were evaluated this year through the sentinel plot system. In Michigan, there were 20 soybean sentinel plots. The plots were set up and then scouted regularly by local extension educators. Data and physical samples collected from the plots were sent to the MSU Diagnostic Services lab for further evaluation. This system is part of a national project set up to promote early detection of soybean rust occurrences (see www.sbrusa.net for more information).

Diseases most commonly found on soybean sentinel plot samples included Septoria and bacterial leaf spots. These pathogens were mostly found on lower leaves. Soybean rust, the disease of most interest, was not detected in Michigan. Frogeye leaf spot and downy mildew were found on samples late in the season. The dry conditions throughout much of the state significantly decreased foliar disease problems in soybeans this year.

In 2007 the program was expanded to include a few other legumes (in Michigan we focused on snap and dry beans). Virus testing was done for soybeans, dry beans and snap beans. These samples were tested for bean common mosaic, bean yellow, alfalfa mosaic and cucumber mosaic. Viruses were not a significant problem in these crops this year. Most other Mid-Western state participating in this project also found virus disease pressure to be light.

Get involved in Local Research

Marilyn L. Thelen, MSU Extension

Clinton County will be hosting many research plots in 2008. Partnering with the Mid-Michigan Trials we will host trials in 5 categories; Corn Grain, Corn after Corn, Glyphosate Tolerant Soybeans, Non GMO / Conventional / Niche Market Soybeans, Soybeans Seed Treatment (Cruiser, Apron, & None) and Soybean Inoculation. In addition, we will host a sentinel plot to track soybean diseases. There may also be opportunities to participate a study on Soybean Cyst Nematode management.

If you would like to be involved in any of these trials, give Marilyn a call at 989-227-6454.

Balancing Animal Agriculture and Communities

MSUE Animal Ag & the Environment Team

The next issue of *The Scoop* will hit e-mail boxes soon and will have a synopsis of the Balancing Animal Agriculture and Communities conference that was held February 29 in East Lansing.

A new Scoop is posted every other month. To get on the electronic distribution list, send an email to stuever@msu.edu and write "Subscribe to The Scoop" in the subject line.

Visit [Animal Ag & Environment](#) website for archived issues of the newsletter. Speakers' presentation from the conference will also be available at this website.

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