

October 2006

NORTHWEST LINK

Thunder Bay ★ Rainy River ★ Kenora Districts

Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association

This newsletter is published monthly except for the months of April and December. Articles should be submitted by the 15th of the month prior to the publishing month. Material in this newsletter is based upon factual information believed to be accurate. Action taken as a result of this information is solely the responsibility of the user. We reserve the right to edit articles.

On-line Toolkit now available for Agricultural Volunteers

Since less than three percent of Canadians are farmers, those that are closely-tied to the agriculture industry must work harder than ever to bring the good news of the farm to the city. With the limited resources available to dedicated agriculture ambassadors, those that are involved in agricultural education must join forces to share ideas and avoid overlapping efforts.

OFAC's **Ag Awareness Toolkit**, now on the OFAC website at www.ofac.org, been designed with this mind. From advice for dealing with difficult situations to petting zoo guidelines and instructions for building your own farm trivia game, the Toolkit will be useful for anyone organizing or volunteering at an agricultural education events.

The toolkit has several different categories of resources including:

Getting the Message Out. This category offers fact sheets on the following: [How to run a Farm Tour](#), [How to deal with the Media](#), [How to Communicate with the Public](#) and [How to write a letter to the editor](#) as well as [How to Manage Disruptions](#), [Dealing with Difficult Situations](#), [Agricultural Ambassador Basics](#) and more.

Under the **Animals on Display** section, there is information on [Effective Animal Displays](#), [Hints for Specific Animal Displays](#), [Petting Zoo Guidelines](#) and a [Livestock Exhibitor Code of Conduct](#).

The **Resources for Planning Your Own Events** category offers downloadable instructions for eye-catching displays, thought-provoking signs, and interactive family activities and includes fact sheets with photos, and tips for planning agricultural awareness events.

Under the **Health and Hand washing** section are links to resources prepared by the Food Safety Network including a [Hand Sanitizer Fact Sheet](#), [Hand Washing Fact Sheet](#) and a [Farm Visits Fact Sheet](#).

Other categories include a link to OFAC's Training and Information Services and one to other Agricultural Awareness website links.

The Ontario Farm Animal Council is a non-profit education organization representing Ontario's 35,000 livestock and poultry farmers and related agri-businesses. OFAC is the voice for animal agriculture, providing a coordinated effort on issues related to animal agriculture and food production including farm animal care, environment, new technology and food safety.

Send your articles to: Linda Turk
R. R. #1 Kakabeka Falls, Ontario
P0T 1W0
807-577-4787 (voice), 807-577-4459 (fax)
Email: lindat@tbaytel.net



Introducing New Initiatives

As part of the Food Security Research and Service Exchange Centre at Lakehead University, we are inviting through the next four issues of Northwest Link your feedback on four proposed initiatives: learning gardens, community gardens, community-shared agriculture (CSAs) and non-timber forest products. We are putting together a number of funding proposals that can assist in the achievement of these four initiatives. Many of these proposals encourage genuine and active partner participation. In this issue of Northwest Link, the focus is on Learning Gardens which can be elementary, secondary or postsecondary schools including our Learning Garden at Lakehead University.

In order to increase local food production, we wish to work with Northwestern Ontario residents to renew skills and interest in growing food. Basic knowledge of gardening and food production is lost as populations become more urban than rural. Further the corporate food economy increases our separation from the sources of our food. These skills need to be taught at an early age by establishing teaching gardens in our educational system. We hope to counter the current distancing that disempowers and deskills people from producing their own food and eating well.

Learning Gardens can provide opportunities to participate in the acquisition of the following skills: seed starting, growing techniques, preserving, cooking, seed saving, water conservation, composting, row covers to extend the growing season and for pest management and natural pest

management. Further, Learning Gardens can engage in research that can extend our knowledge of small scale/home gardening practices favourable to cold climates, selection of cold-tolerant crops, garden techniques to extend the season, unusual crops, methods of composting, solar dryers, solar water heating, and greenhouse tunnels. Learning Gardens can promote cooperative access to tools, storage and processing equipment such as stoves, food dryers, fruit presses, brick oven, and root cellars. Learning Gardens can support intergenerational participation where children can learn with parents and grandparents. There is opportunity for intercultural, ethnic participation and appreciation through exposure to new foods. Moreover, there is the possible adaptation of new ethnic foods to this region and renewal of native approaches to nutrition, health, and medicinal plants and their preparations.



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Factsheets

Production Recommendations for Greenhouse Floriculture, Publication 370; this 2006 edition (160 pages) sells for **\$20.00**.

A Beef Cow-Calf Example: Your Livestock Operation Under the Nutrient Management Act, 2002, Publication 828

EARS Report

Hello! Greetings from the Emo Agricultural Research Station. Wow, can you actually believe how dry it is? I never, ever saw it this way in all my "research years!" Steph and I were cutting our second cut Alfalfa on Wednesday and we had to be careful as the cracks were dangerous for our ankles. We are going to try and get some good pictures, but that isn't always easy.

So, since last month, what have we been doing? We finished harvesting all our cereal crops with scissors. We were likely finished about one week and the binder was fixed and returned. So, we were able to use it on our Soybean trials and it worked fine. Hopefully it will still be good next harvest. We brought in our corn and did some second cut on only our alfalfa plots as the others just don't have enough growth. We are still waiting on the threshing machine. It is still in Thunder Bay and we are hoping to have it back ASAP.

Steph and I still have lots of work to do (without the thresher). Round-Up needs to be applied; soil sampling, plowing and we still have some tree data to collect. Never mind the hours of data to be entered. It has been an incredible year, despite the drought, the warm weather has been just awesome.

I have no yields to report yet, but stay tuned!

Take care and enjoy the fall, it is the most beautiful time of the year...

Kim Jo
Emo Agricultural Research Station
kbliss@uoguelph.ca
482-2354

Upcoming Events

October 3, 2006
Rainy River Federation of Agriculture - Directors Meeting
7:30 p.m. - Emo

October 7, 2006
Cattle Sale
Stratton Sales Barn
Contact - Russell Richards or Clayton Teeple

October 10, 2006
Semen Order
Call - Kim Jo 482-2863

October 21, 2006
Rainy River Federation of Agriculture - Annual Meeting
Stratton
30th Anniversary - Live Band
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October 28, 2006
Cattle Sale
Stratton Sales Barn
Contact - Russell Richards or Clayton Teeple



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2006 Ontario Young Farmers Forum

Sunday November 19th – Monday November 20th
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To register contact the Junior Farmer Association of Ontario (JFAO) :
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www.ontarioyoungfarmersforum.ca

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LET'S GET STARTED, EMPLOYER'S
PACKAGES ARE READY FOR THE TAKING

The Farm Safety Association has Employer Packages now available for only \$21.95. The package is focused towards Ontario's Farming communities in an effort to educate and build awareness of 3 Acts that impact labor in this sector. The package includes:

- The Occupational Health and Safety Act (OSHA)
- A Guide to the Occupational Health and Safety Act for Farming Operations
- Occupational Health and Safety Guidelines
- Health and Safety Program and Templates
- Agricultural Safety Audit Program (ASAP)

- First Aid Requirements – Regulation 1101 (WSIB)
- Form 82 Poster (WSIB)
- Employment Standards Act Poster
- Agricultural Industry Exemption Poster
- Personal protection Equipment Checklist
- Emergency Procedures & Phone Number Poster

Please contact the Farm Safety Association 1-800-361-8855 or email at info@farmsafety.ca

This package is included in the registration fee for the Health and Safety workshops scheduled for November 23rd.

To register for the Emo or Thunder Bay session please contact the OMAFRA Northern Regional Office 1-800-461-6132.

PROVINCE KICKS OFF COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT ANIMAL HEALTH STRATEGY Enhanced Animal Health Strategy Will Increase Protection For People, Animals

The McGuinty government is taking steps to further protect the health and safety of Ontarians by consulting on details of an animal health strategy, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Leona Dombrowsky announced today.

"We are working with farm industry leaders to strengthen Ontario's position as a leader on animal health issues," said Dombrowsky. "With an enhanced strategy for addressing animal health issues in Ontario, we will be better able to protect the health and safety of Ontarians, as well as the economy."

The province currently has a number of animal health programs in place including diagnostic and technical support for private veterinarians, livestock inspection at abattoirs and market auctions and foreign animal disease response plans. In 2005, the McGuinty government established the Office of the Chief Veterinarian for Ontario to examine existing programs and develop a strategy for continued

improvement. These consultations are the next step in the process.

"The consultations will examine a broad range of issues," said Dr. Deb Stark, Chief Veterinarian for Ontario. "Discussions will include suggestions for moving forward in our efforts to address serious animal diseases, such as avian influenza and BSE, and broader issues such as animal welfare and coordinating efforts between the animal and human health communities."

Starting in October, meetings will be held with stakeholder groups. The meetings will focus on the tools needed to implement a more comprehensive approach to animal health, including infrastructure, resources, and legislation, and examine the roles and responsibilities of government partners in safeguarding provincial animal health.

For others wishing to comment, a detailed paper outlining proposed enhancements will be available this fall on the OMAFRA website at www.omafra.gov.on.ca, along with contact information for providing feedback.

"Ontario continues to be a leader on animal health matters," said Gordon Coukell, Chair of the Ontario Livestock and Poultry Council (OLPC). "But to stay on top, you have to keep moving forward. That's why the OLPC is looking forward to working with the Ontario government to continually strengthen our efforts in this area."

Consulting on a strategy for animal health is just one way the McGuinty government is supporting Ontario families who want their health protected. Other initiatives include:

- Investing \$10 million for an Ontario livestock and poultry tracing system that will help the province's agri-food industry strengthen emergency management
- Investing \$25 million to assist the University of Guelph in responding to animal disease

Investing \$25.5 million to help provincial meat plants comply with new, stronger meat regulations.

A Northern consultation will be held November 7th 2006 in Sudbury and Thunder Bay.



MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT INVESTS IN RURAL ONTARIO

\$185 Million Investment Builds Opportunity For Farmers, Improves Rural Infrastructure

Premier Dalton McGuinty announced at the International Plowing Match a new investment in rural Ontario that will build opportunity for farmers and strengthen vital infrastructure in rural communities.

"Farmers are the backbone of our rural communities and they've helped build a world-class agri-food sector in Ontario," said Premier McGuinty. "We want to continue to do our part to support growth and innovation in the agri-food industry to make sure our farmers and their families find success."

The McGuinty government will invest an additional \$185 million in rural Ontario. Of this, \$110 million will go directly to farmers to provide transitional funding as we move to a better method of valuing inventory under the Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization program, and to continue the Self-Directed Risk Management program. Another \$75 million will be invested in rural infrastructure.

Premier McGuinty made today's (September 19, 2006) announcement at the International Plowing Match in Peterborough. He was joined by Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

"The McGuinty government recognizes the challenges facing Ontario farmers, and today's announcement will help them meet those challenges," said Dombrowsky. "Today's investment in rural development is another example of the McGuinty government's commitment to the strength and success of Ontario's rural communities."

Building opportunity for farmers and investing in rural infrastructure are just the latest examples of how the McGuinty government is working on the side of Ontario families to strengthen rural communities.

Other initiatives include:

- Investing \$800 million in farm income stabilization and support programs
- Creating a \$520-million Ontario Ethanol Growth Fund to support the construction of ethanol plants that will build opportunity and create jobs in rural communities
- Investing \$40 million annually in agri-food research and innovation
- Providing \$317 million in support, along with federal partners, to farmers hurt by the repercussions of BSE.

"Ontario's agricultural sector is a vital contributor to our growing economy," said Premier McGuinty. "We're going to continue to work with the agri-food industry to chart a course for the future that will build opportunity for farmers and strengthen our rural communities."


WOOD ASH

Wood ash is available to Thunder Bay-area farmers. For details on eligibility, please contact Linda Turk, 577-4787, fax 577-4459, or email lindat@tbaytel.net



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Risk Management, Hedging Seminars

Hosted by the Ontario Cattlemen's Association and presented by Perry Iverson, Commodity Ingredient Hedging, Chicago, IL. Learn about "Adding Value to your Beef Margin Decisions!"

Goals for Producers:

Identify your forward profit margin

Assess your margin situation

Make effective contracting decisions

A session is planned for Thunder Bay November 2, 2006. A \$50.00 fee is due on registration which includes a Prime Rib lunch, a leather portfolio and a calculator.



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Canadian Agricultural Skills Service (CASS)

Successful farm business managers have always recognized the need for continuous learning to adapt new production and business practices and prosper in an ever changing marketplace. To help producers respond, the Canadian Agricultural Skills Service (CASS) is available to assist qualifying producers and their spouses develop the skills and knowledge they need to increase their farm profitability and net family income. CASS is designed to help farm families acquire skills and training for future.

CASS provides qualified applicants with no-cost access to a professional advisor who will meet with you and focus on understanding your existing skills, plans and goals, and provide you with a clear path on how to achieve them.

Depending on their net family income, participants may also receive financial assistance to complete their training activities. Financial benefits range from \$8,000 - \$16,000 for qualified participants, depending on their averaged net family income and other eligibility requirements.

CASS is a Renewal program under the federal-provincial-territorial Agricultural Policy

Framework. The Colleges of Ontario Network for Education and Training (CON*NECT) delivers CASS in Ontario, in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

You can get more information about the program visiting the website at www.ontario.ca/cass or by calling the CON*NECT CASS Centre at 1-877-830-0200.

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or

Amos (807) 483-7717

Nutrient Management Courses

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) will be offering the following Nutrient Management courses in Northwestern Ontario:

How to Prepare a Nutrient Management Strategy and Plan using NMAN

November 21st and 22nd – Thunder Bay

Regulations and Protocols

November 28th and 29th – Emo

Fundamentals of Nutrient Management

December 6th and 7th – Emo

All sessions run from 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Course Registration Fee:

\$95 for producers (\$70 per person for additional members of farm or farm family);

\$180 per person for non-producers (\$130 per person for additional individual within organization)

Lunch and refreshments are included for all full-day courses. Register by calling 1-800-461-6132.

Factsheets

06-073: Nutrient Management Act 2002, RECORDKEEPING, Agdex 720/538; it replaces Order No. 04-077.

A Layer Farm Example: Your Livestock Operation Under the Nutrient Management Act, 2002, Publication 829

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Premier's Award Of Excellence Recognizes Innovation On The Farm

Details of the process, as well as applications and guidelines are available at:

www.omafra.gov.on.ca

premiersagrifoodinnovationaward@ontario.ca

1-877-424-1300

To be considered for this award, applications must be submitted to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs by November 30, 2006.

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The 2007 Canadian Plowing Championships

The 2007 Canadian Plowing Championships are coming to Thunder Bay September 5th to 8th 2007. The Slate River Plowmen's Association is hosting the event in conjunction with their 75th local plowing match.

The competition will be held at 3 locations and features competition in 3 classes. The classes are: Senior Plowman, conventional plow, Senior Plowman, reversible plow and Junior Plowman, conventional plow. The senior winners will represent Canada at the World Plowing Championships.

Hosting national championships present unique opportunities to assist the organizing committee. Anyone wishing to offer their volunteer time may contact any member of the Slate River Plowmen's Association.

Additional information about the Canadian Plowing Championships can be found at:
<http://www.canadianplowing.ca/index.html>

The World Plowing Championships can be found at: <http://www.worldploughing.org/index.html>

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Funding Cap Increased for the Canada-Ontario Farm Stewardship Program (COFSP)

Adjustments to the Canada-Ontario Farm Stewardship Program (COFSP) mean that a farm business may now be eligible for a contribution up to \$50,000 for the implementation of beneficial management practices (BMP). The previous program cap of \$30,000 was raised to \$50,000 by government partners in response to producer requests. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs recognized a willingness by producers to do more for the environment, if reasonable cost-sharing could be extended. Those producers who reached the earlier cap will be able to submit applications for additional projects to conserve and enhance soil, water, air and wildlife habitat resources on the farm.

COFSP is delivered in collaboration with the Environmental Farm Plan and supported through the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF), an agreement among federal, provincial and territorial governments to make Canada's agricultural sector a world leader. The Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition facilitated the delivery of APF environment programs using a one window approach. Delivery is through the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA).

The COFSP funding cap increase took effect April 1, 2006. All other category and program funding caps remain unchanged. The percentage cost-sharing offered across the 25 COFSP categories of eligible projects also remains unchanged. They will remain as presented in the Project Eligibility Guidelines (available through OSCIA).

Producers who reached the previous funding cap may now be eligible for additional funds for implementing new BMPs identified in their Environmental Farm Plan (EFP). Earlier Project Proposal Applications, which had been granted final approval to proceed, but were on hold because the previous \$30,000 cap had been reached, may now be reactivated. Participants must confirm that the cost share allocation is still

available by contacting their local OSCIA Program Representative.

For projects where the cost-share contribution cheque was issued by OSCIA after April 1, 2006, but at a reduced level due to the previous program funding cap, a second payment may be issued based on the new funding cap. The OSCIA Guelph office will work with local Program Representatives to determine which projects are eligible for a second payment; it will be issued in the upcoming months. In these circumstances, there is no requirement for the applicant to submit additional information.

Projects that were completed and received cost-share payment prior to April 1, 2006, will not be eligible for a second payment.

The increase in the program cap to \$50,000 per farm business will provide an opportunity for those already involved in EFP to undertake additional projects. There is still opportunity for those who have not yet enrolled to take advantage. Project allocations will continue to be made while funds are available, or until the scheduled end of the program (March 31, 2008), whichever occurs first.

COFSP is delivered alongside Greencover Canada and Tier 1 of the Canada-Ontario Water Supply Expansion Program. Applicants should be aware that the program caps for these two programs are not affected by the recent announcement.

For details on program eligibility, BMP categories, cost-share, and procedures for submitting an application, refer to the Project Eligibility Guidelines available from the local OSCIA Program Representative or by visiting www.ontariosoilcrop.org



Are Soil Samples Consistent Year to Year?

- Keith Reid, Soil Fertility Specialist, OMAFRA, Stratford

Occasionally I get questions about whether soil sample values change depending on the weather in a given year, or the time of year the sample was taken. This is a question that troubles me, because there is no easy answer. Soil test values vary over time, but for most soil tests the variation is relatively small, and the direction of change is not always predictable.

Sample Depth Influences Soil Test

This leads me to believe that most of the variation over time is NOT reflecting changes in the chemistry of the soil, but instead is a reflection of changes in what soil was sampled. We know that the fertility of the soil declines as we go deeper. This is particularly true in forage or no-till fields that have not been worked for many years. Even in conventionally tilled fields, the vertical mixing of nutrients is not perfect. Some stratification develops over the growing season as plants pull nutrients to the surface and then leave them in the crop residue. Because of this stratification, the depth of soil that is sampled can have a large impact on the soil test value for that sample.

Soil Conditions Can Affect Sample Depth

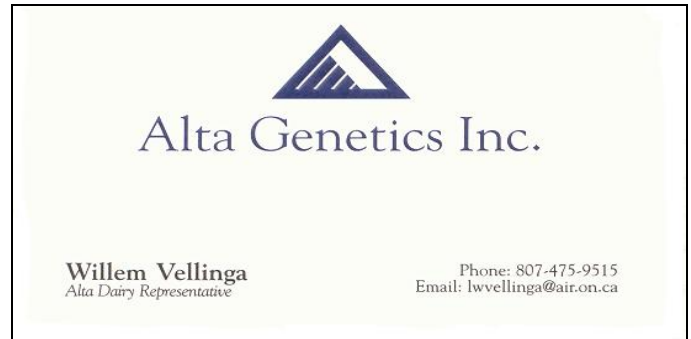
So what does this have to do with variation in soil test over time? The depth of the sample is often related to how hard the ground is, so a sample from a dry, compacted field will likely be shallower than

from a loose or moist field. To illustrate my point, a farmer called who was quite concerned about the increase in his soil test values after one application of liquid manure to his pasture fields. He had been collecting samples in August, when the weather had been very dry. When I asked more questions he admitted that the samples might have been 4 inches deep rather than 6 inches, and that he had sampled through any manure that was laying on the surface. A subsequent sample, taken later in the fall when the ground had softened, showed more reasonable soil test values.

Consistent Sampling Time Equals Consistent Results

You can increase the consistency of your sample results over time by taking care in how the samples are taken. The advantage of always sampling at the same time of year is that soil conditions are usually consistent, so it is easier to achieve consistent depth.

Watch out though, that a consistent depth doesn't mean you are sampling into the subsoil in compacted or eroded areas of the field, or your sample will show lower results than it should!



Soil Compaction

- Adam Hayes, Soil Management Specialist, OMAFRA

For many years now, deep tillage implements have been suggested as tools that can be used to loosen soil and improve crop yields. These implements can provide some benefit by loosening soil compaction, but they are really prescription tools and not to be used at will. Similar to a prescription drug, if you don't have a problem then the drug isn't going to do anything.

Prevention

Preventing soil compaction is a better than trying to fix the problem. There are a number of management options that can be implemented to try to minimize soil compaction.

- Some areas of the province are dry, but other areas have more soil moisture than is normal for this time of year. Watch soil moisture and try to stay off the field when it is wet. This is easily said but sometimes hard to do because harvest schedules dictate the crop must come off.
- Reduce the pressure on the soil. This can be done by attempting to keep axle loads below 5 tons per axle. Use radial tires at low inflation pressures to create a larger foot print.
- Reduce the traffic on the field. Load wagons or trucks on a road (if it can be done safely) or a lane. Carry heavy loads down one area instead of all over the field.

Diagnosis

Do you have a soil compaction problem? Before you pull out the deep tillage implement, take some time to determine if soil compaction is really the problem.

It is relatively easy to determine if you have a compaction problem. Using a tile probe or similar rod, probe the area to a depth of 50 cm (20 inches). Compare to a fence row or unaffected area. The tile probe should be slowly inserted into the ground at a steady speed. Your arms should be slightly bent, acting as the pressure gauge measuring the force required to push the tip of the probe through the soil.

Record depths at which the tip of the probe requires more force to get it through the ground. This can be done by stopping when the probe reaches the layer with more resistance, putting your fingers around the probe at the soil surface and removing the probe to see the depth. It can be repeated at the bottom of the layer.

You can also use a shovel to dig up plants in an affected area. Look at the roots and compare to roots of plants in a healthy unaffected area. Compacted areas will have plants with malformed or restricted roots. Roots in a compacted area may also be

concentrated in the top few inches of the soil. Make sure the areas you compare with the probe have similar soil moisture levels.

If you detect an area that you believe is compacted, it is a good idea to dig down to that area and confirm.

Sometimes there can be a soil texture change which slows the probe and is not a compacted layer. Also, if the soil compaction is at a depth below 12-14 inches, there is not much you can do about it with tillage.

Remedial Measures

If you have determined that there is a compacted layer at a depth that you can do something about, then you can consider remedial measures. Deep tillage is an option. It should be done when the soil is dry, with an implement that will shatter the soil. Ideally, a cover crop should be planted following the operation that will put roots down to help keep the soil cracks open.

It is important once the tillage is done to avoid the practices in the future that caused the compaction in the first place. A non-tillage option is to plant a deeprooted crop to penetrate a compacted area.



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Message from the OSCIA President

Labour Day has come and gone, and it feels as if summer is about over. It has been a summer of records – record wheat yields and record grain prices; record low that is, as grain and oil seed producers struggle forward in hope of some aid in the short term and a risk management plan in the long term.

The NMFAP has been fully subscribed and all construction and inspection must be completed by September 30th.

Environmental Farm Plan Workshops were held throughout the summer and plans are being peer reviewed, with projects approved and completed. To date we have held approximately 440 workshops and have approved approximately 7100 projects for a total of \$33 million dollars in federal contribution. Some of the categories such as Tier 1 of the Canada-Ontario Water Supply Expansion Program have nearly reached total allotment.

The Summer Directors' Meeting was held in Peterborough this past August, hosted by Frank and Julia Hoftzyer. With formal business completed, the group was treated to a tour of the area, which included a visit to a 1500 ewe sheep farm, and a 1200 doe goat milking operation complete with a cheese plant. These operations dispel the myth of sheep and goat operations being hobby farms. Other highlights of our visit to the area included a visit to a buffalo farm, Pickseed's Forage Research Station and plant (where they graciously provided us with a superb lunch), a dinner cruise on the Peterborough Locks, and the Canoe Museum. Thanks

to the Hoftzyer family for an enjoyable time. Thanks also to the many agri-business sponsors for their generous support.

OSCIA's exhibit at Canada's Outdoor Farm Show this month was very busy with several plots and demos.

New this year was a partnership with Bayer CropScience, who hosted a brunch for Soil & Crop members bringing a non-member along. Hopefully, some of you were able to participate. As fall approaches, harvesting of our trials and demo plots begins. The results of these plots will be presented this fall and winter at annual meetings throughout the province. Be sure to attend your Soil and Crop annual meeting to learn the results of the local area. Enjoy this bountiful season with family and friends, and remember to think and work safely.

But Why Would One Use Ammonium Sulphate?

-Dr. Tarlok Singh Sahota

I was discussing about Sulphur, the protein forming essential nutrient, and possibility of meeting its requirement through the use of ammonium sulphate with a group of growers this winter. An intelligent grower asked, "But why would one use ammonium sulphate?" The grower was hinting at the high cost of ammonium sulphate as a source of N, because it is considered primarily as an N fertilizer. Quite often we forget that it also contains 24% S for which we need to assign a monetary value as well. Considering both N and S in ammonium sulphate it costs \$1.05/kg nutrients (N + S), which compares favourably well with urea at \$1.03/kg nutrient (N in this case). Besides, soil applied N from ammonium sulphate is not as quickly lost as that from urea and S being in the sulphate form, in ammonium sulphate, is readily available to the crop plants. While discussing the advantages of S application to crop plants, in one of my earlier articles, I wrote:

"Since S plays an important role in protein synthesis, protein yield/acre could be significant with S application even if the forage yields were non-significant. Recent research at Michigan State University indicated that an investment of \$6.25 (25lb S/acre @ \$0.25/lb S) in fertilizer S returned

an average of 0.40 tons of alfalfa (over 4 years), which based on \$100/ton is worth \$40. A 6 to 1 is a very nice return! In corn silage, even though application of S @ 46 lb/acre resulted only in insignificant increase in yield or tissue concentration of S, it improved the NDF-d by 6.7 % and consequently increased the milk yield (lb/ton) by 5.9 % and milk/acre by 1833 lbs (Everett 2004). *Thus the milk yield improvement from a 50 acre corn silage field supplied with S could be 91650 lbs or 41.5 tons. Another advantage would be that the soils will not be left poorer of S. After all each crop, with or without S application, will continue to mine S from the soil.* “

In an article in the Ontario Farmer, January 31, 2006, Glenn Powell stated that there was some test work indicating that corn growers may need to pay attention to Sulphur in their fertility program. Applied as a starter fertilizer, additional sulphur produced an 11 bushel (average) per acre increase in yield on several sites in Michigan. At Thunder Bay, we found urea to be as good a source of N for corn as ammonium nitrate. Let us see what it costs if some one has to apply 100 kg N/ha to corn from urea, ammonium nitrate and ammonium sulphate. At the current fertilizer prices at Thunder Bay Coop (urea: \$472/MT, ammonium nitrate: \$449/MT and ammonium sulphate: \$474/MT), it will cost a grower \$102.60 from urea, \$132.06 from ammonium nitrate (often the preferred N fertilizer), \$128.46 with 79% N from urea and 21% N from ammonium sulphate and \$ 133.38 with 75% N from urea and 25% N from ammonium sulphate. The latter two options aren't costlier, as compared to ammonium nitrate, and have an advantage of supplying 24-29 kg S/ha as a bonus. My question, considering aforesaid advantages, is why wouldn't an enlightened grower use ammonium sulphate, at least partly, if not totally?

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Fall 2006 Farmers' Field Tour at Thunder Bay

-Dr. Tarlok Singh Sahota

Soil and Crop Improvement Association (SCIA), Thunder Bay, first time conducted its fall 2006 Field Tour on September 7, 2006, which offered a lot of learning opportunities, provided a forum for interactive discussions and was very well covered by Thunder Bay TV. This is something that the SCIA might like to repeat every year. Here are some of my observations/thoughts.

The tour started at Peter and Rensje Aalbers corn field. Peter had grown tall and short varieties of corn (CHU range of 2150-2450), from Pioneer (39H83 & 39T66), Pickseed (2230RR), DeKalb (26-78) and Hyland (Baxxos RR) seed companies, in alternate strips giving rise to a 'U' shape canopy, which, increases inception of sunlight into the crop canopy and thereby leads to improved photosynthesis and better crop yields at no added cost. Plants convert carbon dioxide and water into carbohydrates in the presence of sunlight. Peter's fertilizer schedule, finalized in consultation with Thunder Bay Agricultural Research Station (TBARS)/Dr. Sahota, is based on soil tests, taking into consideration nutrients availability from manure and nutrient deficiencies in his farm land. He had partly substituted urea with ammonium sulphate to make it more efficient and bring cost of nitrogen at par with that from ammonium nitrate, which in some crops is considered superior to urea. However, research at TBARS has shown that urea, which is cheapest in terms of cost per unit nitrogen, was as good a fertilizer for corn as ammonium nitrate. TBARS had identified deficiency of sulphur, zinc and boron in the field crops at Thunder Bay. Peter had therefore applied secondary

and micronutrients, such as sulphur, zinc and boron, which help in chlorophyll (green matter in plants that helps in photosynthesis) and protein formation. Dr. Sahota informed that even when sulphur didn't improve crop yields; it increased the protein yield, thus leading to a healthier food/feed. Peter has all the reasons to smile because, not only his crop looks much better than last year, but it is also going to leave the soil healthier than before at a negligible additional cost of only two dollars/acre. TBARS had identified deficiency of sulphur, zinc and boron in the field crops at Thunder Bay. Some of the practices at Peter's farm were seen replicated in corn fields of Jim and Wilma Mol who too had grown different varieties of corn and applied zinc and manganese. Corn is one of the most sensitive crops to zinc deficiency, said Dr. Sahota. Milk line and corn borer damage was very well shown/ explained to the participants by Wilma Mol, who is becoming our local corn expert!

Allan and Henry's corn was perhaps the best, due to good management and high inherent fertility of their fields. The crop was vigorous enough to come out of the suspected zinc deficiency until the tasseling stage. However, corn in Jim & Wilma's or in Peter's fields didn't have as many empty tops as in Allan's field. There could be two reasons; (i) due to multiple varieties in Wilma/Peter's fields, pollens for pollination would have come at different times/and for prolonged duration and hence the pollens weren't a limiting factor for pollination and (ii) both Wilma and Peter had applied micronutrients, especially zinc. Thus it may be advisable to seed more than one/two varieties of corn with similar/or staggered maturity duration on a single farm, apply zinc to corn and if possible supply N from a combination of urea and ammonium sulphate. If the varieties are of different heights, but with similar maturity, one can harvest more sun light by seeding such varieties (refer to a 'U' type canopy in Para 2). This could be a potential on-farm research project for SCIA!

Two soybean varieties, already tested at TBARS, PS26RR (2425 CHUs) at Fritz Jaspers's farm and RoscoRR (2500 CHUs) at Allan Mol's farm, were almost ready for combining. This indicates that high heat unit varieties of corn/and soybean, especially

soybean, could be grown in our area. We saw even the top pods in such varieties filled up with grains. Jason Reid counted 71 pods on RoscoRR and Rudy Buitenhuis noticed 2-3 stems from a single RoscoRR plant. Since podding starts from the bottom of the plants in soybean, only a few top pods could be at risk due to early frost. In such an eventuality, high heat units varieties of soybean will give at least as much yield as Gaillard, if not more. And with warm fall, one can reap better harvest from high heat unit varieties.

Since soybean is seeded only when the soils warm up (i.e. later than cereals that face colder early spring), there may be a possibility of skipping P/and K application in fields that have high to very high P and K tests and which receive manure. Availability of native P and K or even other nutrients improves as the soils warm up. P and K from manure @4000-5000gallons/acre will be enough to meet crop requirements leaving the soil at a high-very high level of these two nutrients. The idea could be tested simultaneously at TBARS and farmers' fields. This too could be a potential on-farm research project for SCIA!

Lot of volunteer barley (result of shattered seeds from spring barley) was seen in 90 acre winter wheat field of Fritz Jaspers seeded on August 31, because the barley seeds were in the soil earlier than wheat seeds (i.e. at the time of land preparation) and were able to absorb soil moisture before the soil became dry by the wheat seeding time. Optimum seeding depth for winter wheat is 1 inch even though it could be seeded to a maximum depth of 3 inches. Fritz's Winter wheat was seeded shallow at less than an inch's depth. Also the food in barley seed is easily converted to plant available form as compared to that in wheat as can be seen from earlier emergence of barley than wheat in the spring when the two are seeded on the same date. It may be advisable to kill spring barley with Round Up before winter wheat emergence to avoid competition to winter wheat during the fall. If it had rained after spring barley harvest, volunteer barley would have emerged much earlier and would have been killed at the time of land preparation.

The farmers had grown multiple varieties of corn and soybean. Obviously they don't want to put all their eggs in one basket and have been trying to minimize risk of crop failure, if any, by growing more than one variety. Ben Kamphof and Allan Mol said that the research at TBARS had helped the area growers in a big way in crop/and variety selection and in a better crop management.

Lunch was provided to the participants by SCIA and Belluz Farms.

For more information on either program, please contact Kari Lemelin at 807-486-0157.

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Average Hot Weight 649.50 lbs Average Price
82.91¢/lb Average Settlement \$517.89

Week ending September 09, 2006
Average Hot Weight 629.32 lbs Average Price
78.95¢/lb Average Settlement \$496.82

Week ending September 16, 2006
Average Hot Weight 639.73 lbs Average Price
77.545¢/lb Average Settlement \$496.07

Grid range for cows has been 45.6¢ to 86.8¢ per pound

The most recent grid range for bulls has been 85.0¢ to 92.0¢ per pound.

The range for steers and heiferettes has been 79.2¢ to 91.1¢ per pound.

FARM TOUR 2006

Pine Hill Farm is the site of this year's TBFA Farm Tour. Brian and Joyce Belluz, 363 Barrie Drive, open their gates to the public at 10 a.m. on Saturday, October 7, and visitors are invited to tour

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the fields and barns, to stop for lunch, and to shop and talk with vendors. The farm is open to visitors until 3 p.m. If you're free that day to volunteer, please call Trudy Reid at 935-3224 or Linda Turk at 577-4787. We hope to see you there!
Watch for the orange balloons.

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Recent Winnipeg Cattle Prices

Prices on feeders decreased slightly for the heavier weights and increased for the lighter weights in the past month. There has also been a big increase in volume of head sold.. Here are the price ranges for steers at Winnipeg Livestock Sales to September 22.

Over 1000 lbs.	\$ 88.00 –	102.75
900 – 1000 lbs.	\$ 90.00 –	109.00
800 – 900 lbs.	\$ 100.00 –	119.50
700 – 800 lbs.	\$ 105.00 –	132.00
600 – 700 lbs.	\$ 112.00 –	134.00
500 – 600 lbs.	\$ 115.00 –	146.50
400 – 500 lbs.	\$ 120.00 –	165.00
under 400 lbs.	\$ 125.00 –	182.00

Slaughter steer and heifer prices increased slightly while cow prices dropped slightly in the past month. Here are the price ranges to September 22.

Choice Strs. & Hfrs.	\$ 80.00 –	89.00
Select Strs. & Hfrs.	\$ 75.00 –	84.00
Cows Dry Fed	\$ 28.00 –	39.00
Good Fleshed	\$ 20.00 –	34.00
Lean	\$ 12.00 –	27.25
Shells	\$ 2.00 –	15.00
Good Bulls	\$ 19.00 –	44.00

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