

Agricultural Newsletter

UW-Madison College of Ag & Life Science
University of Wisconsin-Extension



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Money saving tips for high input prices

Kevin Schoessow
Area Ag Development Agent
Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties

Recent, dramatic increases in agriculture input prices are causing farmers to contemplate ways to reduce their costs. While certain input costs cannot be avoided or negotiated there are several strategies farmers can implement to help trim costs. Below is a list of some strategies.

Fertilizer:

Update and review soil test reports. If reduced rates of applied fertilizer are being considered, a soil test is the best way to verify which fields are likely candidates for reduced fertilizer applications. Use the preplant or pre-sidedress nitrate test to confirm fields where nitrogen rates may be reduced. Recognize cropping situations that need little or no fertilizer N, such as corn following alfalfa and heavily manured fields. Avoid N losses by using split applications or incorporation.

Follow UW-Extension fertilizer recommendations, including taking credit for all legume and manure fertilizer credits. Don't forget about second year credits on manure and alfalfa.

Fuel saving ideas:

Tillage uses more fuel per acre than almost any other field operation. Carefully evaluate your tillage plans and reduce tillage or the intensity of tillage wherever you can. Reduce the number of trips across the field by combining operations where possible. Match the tractor to the load. Avoid using heavy, high horsepower tractors for operations that don't require much power. Inflate tires to appropriate pressure. Try to minimize the amount of time spent driving tractors and other field equipment on the road.

Utilities:

The Focus on Energy program has a number of fact sheets on energy conservation in agriculture. They have energy saving tips on grain drying, hot water heating, indoor and outdoor lighting, ventilation and heating systems, irrigation and crop storage facilities and general farm enterprises. Focus on Energy also offers technical and financial assistance to qualified farmers. For more information about the Focus on Energy program, contact them at 1-800-762-7077 or visit their website at www.focusonenergy.com/Business/Agriculture/.

Agricultural NEWSLETTER

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and
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Spoooner, WI 54801 or UWEX Area
Agricultural Agent, Ashland Ag Research
Station, 68760 State Farm Road, Ashland, WI
54806.

NCR-SARE announces 2008 Farmer Rancher grant call for proposals

The 2008 North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (NCR-SARE) Farmer Rancher Grant Call for Proposals is now available online at <http://www.sare.org/NCRSARE/prod.htm>.

Farmers and ranchers in the North Central Region can submit proposals for grants to support sustainable agriculture project ideas. Projects should emphasize research or education/demonstration. Individual farmers can get grants of up to \$6,000 and groups of three or more farmers can receive grants of up to \$18,000.

NCR-SARE expects to fund about 50 projects in the twelve-state North Central Region with this call.

The SARE Farmer Rancher Grant Program will now accept project proposals by email. NCR-SARE is now asking applicants to complete a brief budget narrative in their project proposal. Also, beginning farmers and/or youth may apply.

The deadline for proposals is Monday, Dec. 1, 2008 at 4:30 p.m.

Potential applicants with questions can contact Joan Benjamin, NCR-SARE Farmer Rancher Grant Program Coordinator, at jbenjamin2@unl.edu or 402-472-0809. Applicants can also contact the Wisconsin SARE Coordinator, Diane Mayerfeld at dbmayerfeld@wisc.edu or 608-262-8188.

The NCR has funded more than 650 farmer rancher grants worth more than \$4,300,000 since the inception of this program. One of the recent SARE Farmer Rancher Grant recipients in Wisconsin is Heather Smith, who runs a Community Supported Agriculture vegetable farm in Buffalo County. She received a grant to evaluate the effectiveness of using interns to meet seasonal labor needs.

“The grant allowed us to focus on making the internship experience rewarding for the interns as well as meeting the labor needs of our farm,” said Smith. “It was great to see the very positive evaluations we got from our interns at the end of the season. Another benefit of the grant is that SARE encouraged us to make contact with farmer networks like the Land Stewardship Program, so we can share what we learned and can also share the work of finding and creating experiences for interns.”

Another recent grant recipient is Jim Stute, who farms in Walworth County. He is using the grant to test alternative cover crops for his corn-soybean-winter wheat rotation. Stute notes that the funding from SARE allows him to try cover crops that have been used in other areas but don't have a track record in Wisconsin.

More information about the SARE program is available at www.sare.org.

Contact: North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (NCR-SARE), 612-625-7027, ncrsare@unm.edu

Now is the time to plan for spring frost seeding

*Tom Syverud
Extension and Outreach Educator
Douglas County*

Frost seeding--sometimes referred to as over-seeding--can be an economical method of improving pasture and hay field yields and palatability. Seed is broadcast in late winter or very early spring when the ground is still frozen. The expansion and contraction of soil, from the spring freezing and thawing action, helps work the seed into the soil for good seed-to-soil contact and germination. Avoid seeding when there is still heavy snow cover since seed may be lost during a fast melt and runoff. The key to success is proper timing and reducing competition by grazing.

The ideal field for frost seeding is an old pasture that is 'played out'. Frost seeding is an attractive alternative for someone who wants to improve a pasture with low-input costs. An added advantage is that the pasture will be usable during the summer; there is no need to remove animals completely. Frost seeding requires very little equipment, namely an ATV, small tractor and three-point spreader or a hand-held broadcaster.

Legumes are about 50-60% effective in establishment and grasses are about 20 -30% effective when frost seeding. This means one year out of four will give you an excellent catch. Poor establishment occurs in dry springs and early summers. The probability of success decreases with the onset of higher temperatures and

lower moisture. Alfalfa should only be tried when the soils are well-drained and the pH is near neutral and fertility high. It seems that bunch-type grasses and thin sod offer less competition than vigorous stands of brome and bluegrass. Graze closely the fall before seeding to reduce competition. It is not necessary but a light disking in the fall may help legume establishment. An early summer grazing can help reduce competition from existing grasses and weeds.

Seeding rates of 2 to 4 lbs/A for red clover and trefoil should establish 2 to 5 and 4 to 8 plants per square foot, respectively. Two to 4 lbs of alfalfa should establish 2 to 5 plants per square foot. Perennial ryegrass at 2 to 4 lbs should give 8 to 10 plants per square foot, while orchard grass at 1 to 2 lbs should give 3 to 5 plants per square foot.

Conference for women farmers and farm women

*Friday-Saturday, Dec. 5-6, 2008
Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells*

Did you know that there are over 7,000 Wisconsin women who are principal farm operators (primary decision makers) according to the USDA Ag. Census? Despite these numbers, women farmers are frequently disconnected from information and services that can help them farm more profitably.

This conference is designed to help women farmers thrive by learning risk management tools that can help them analyze possible loss areas in their enterprise, and connect with resources, and to provide valuable network opportunities with other women farmers. Conference topics

include financial, production, marketing, and social risk management tools. The keynote speaker will be Jane Eckert of Eckert AgriMarketing.

For information call 1-800-942-2474.

PDPW Youth Leadership Derby

Rev up your engines! The Youth Leadership Derby is the perfect opportunity for all students ages 15-18 to tune up their leadership skills and explore the many career opportunities in the dairy industry. With hands-on labs, interactive workshops and one-of-a-kind tours, the Youth Leadership Derby is going to be a fast-paced, action-packed weekend of fun and learning.

This year's Youth Leadership Derby will be November 8-9 at the Brillion High School. Participants will experience two dairy tour stops at Holsum Dairies and Ran-Rose Farms, along with a tour of Land O'Lakes cheese plant. Students will also learn about animal well-being, goal setting and how to be a dairy ambassador. Students will get a first-hand look at unique dairy-related careers during a virtual job shadow with young dairy leaders. This panel will feature impressive role models who will share their experiences and advice.

Along with these valuable training sessions and learning labs, the Youth Leadership Derby is packed with networking opportunities and fun, fast-moving activities. All students ages 15-18 are welcome. Dairy experience is not necessary.

To register or receive additional information, visit www.pdpw.org or call 800-947-7379.

Biomass crops for renewable energy workshop to be held

*Kevin Schoessow
Area Ag Development Agent
Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties*

UW-Extension is offering a workshop – “Biomass Crops for Renewable Energy: Opportunities and Challenges” on Wednesday, October 8th, from 9:30

Grant writing for farmers, farm businesses is focus of two autumn workshops

*Contact: Carl Rainey (DATCP) 608-224-5139
Anne Pfeiffer (UWEX) 608-890-1905*

Two upcoming workshops will help farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs successfully apply for state and federal grants.

The training will explain how to apply for:

- Agricultural Development and Diversification (ADD) grants from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
- Value Added Producer grants (VAPG) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development
- The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, from the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service

These programs provide funds for research and development, planning, and working capital to farmers and farmer-based businesses.

The workshop schedule:

Menasha — Tuesday, Oct.,21, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Heckrodt Wetland Reserve Nature Center, 1305 Plank Road. To register, contact Fred Depies, fkdepies@charter.net, 920-418-2718; or Glacierland Resource Conservation and Development Council, 920-465-3006.

Eau Claire — Friday, Nov. 7, 9:30 a.m.- 2:30 p.m., Washington Town Hall, 5750 Old Town Hall Road. To register, contact: Pam Herdrich, Pam.Herdrich@wi.usda.gov, 715-834-9672, or River Country Resource Conservation and Development Council, 715-834-9672 or 800-226-9672.

The \$10 registration fee includes lunch and materials.

Workshop sponsors are the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection; Glacierland Resource Conservation and Development Council; River Country Resource Conservation and Development Council; Michael Fields Agricultural Institute; USDA-Rural Development; USDA-SARE; and UW-Extension Agricultural Innovation Center.

AM to 3:00 PM. The purpose of this workshop is to explore concerns about energy costs, climate change, and energy dependence that have driven Wisconsin farmers and entrepreneurs to start producing their own energy. In Western and Northwestern Wisconsin, there is potential for expanding the use of locally grown biomass fuel producing crops on marginal lands not suited for continuous row cropping.

“Biomass Crops for Renewable Energy: Opportunities and Challenges” is a workshop for farmers, greenhouse owners, rural landowners, and others interested in growing, harvesting, and utilizing biomass energy crops for renewable energy.

The workshop, which is scheduled for October 8th at the Spooner Ag Research Station, will focus on non-oilseed perennial crops including miscanthus, switchgrass, and hybrid poplar.

The \$10 registration fee includes lunch. Participants can attend either the first half of the day (10:30 AM to 1:30 PM) the second half of the day (12:00 PM to 3:00 PM) or both. To register, contact the Barron County UW-Extension office at 715.537.6250.

For a copy of the brochure visit www.bioenergyforum.com. For additional questions contact Kevin Schoessow or Otto Wiegand, Burnett, Washburn and Sawyer Counties, at 800-528-1914, or Tim Jergenson, Barron County, at 715-537-6250.

This program is organized by Barron, St. Croix, Bayfield, Ashland, Burnett, Washburn, and Sawyer County UW-Extension and the Spooner Ag Research Station.

Dairy Road Show offers farmers a competitive edge

*UW-Barron County, Rice Lake
Wednesday, January 14
10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.*

Make plans to attend the 2009 University of Wisconsin-Extension Dairy Road Show in January. This year's Road Show entitled "Gaining the Competitive Edge - A Dairy Seminar Series" will be offered locally at UW-Barron County at Rice Lake on Weds., Jan. 14, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Besides the Rice Lake location, the program will be offered at 13 other locations in Wisconsin from Jan. 7-16, including Chippewa Falls, also held Jan. 14, and Amery and Baldwin on Jan. 13.

The topics will include:

- **Farm Business Management Strategies for Uncertain Times**, with the current uncertainty in our input and output markets, our old risk management practices may not work, so what farm management strategies should we employ in these uncertain times by Dr. Greg Hadley, UW-River Falls Extension Ag & Natural Resources Specialist.
- **Livestock Gross Margin for Dairy**, a new insurance product available for Wisconsin dairy producers that protects the gross margin (milk value less feed costs) against unexpected price declines, by Dr. Victor Cabrera, UW-Extension Ag Dairy Management Specialist.
- **Myth-Busting Milking Routines**, the "real scoop" on what research shows about milking routines, in this

presentation, we will "bust" some of common milking procedure myths by presenting the latest research data, by Dr. Pamela Ruegg, UW-Extension Milk Quality Specialist.

- **Calf Barn Ventilation - A Breath of Fresh Air**, micro-climates in individual calf pens can be improved by using positive pressure tubes in naturally-ventilated freestalls,

by Dr. Brian Holmes, UW-Extension Ag Engineer.

The fee for the program, which includes lunch and materials, is \$25 per person. Registrations are due one week before the seminar you wish to attend.

For additional information, please contact Agents Tim Jergenson at 715-537-6250, Otto Wiegand at 715-635-3506 or 800-528-1914, Ryan Sterry at 715-485-8600, or by email at otto.wiegand@ces.uwex.edu.

Check out WHAT'S NEW on the University of Wisconsin Center for Dairy Profitability (CDP) Website

<http://cdp.wisc.edu>

Dairy Enterprise Planning Budget for 2008 (WI)

This spreadsheet allows one to construct enterprise and cash flow budgets for dairy. This budget package is intended to help decision makers assess the profitability and financial feasibility of dairy operations under various price and cost conditions.

2008 ABCS Crop Enterprise Budgets

2008 ABCS Fresh Market Budgets

ABCS© is a farm management tool for the distribution, editing, printing, and creation of single and whole farm crop and livestock enterprise budgets and data sets. ABCS© is an interactive menu-driven stand alone computer program for use by extension personnel, researchers, farm managers, students and teachers. Version 7.1 for Windows/Windows95.

AgFA© Subscribers: 2008 Milk Price Information

The Agriculture Financial Advisor (AgFA©) program has been designed to assist in the collection, analysis, and storage of financial data and certain farm profile information for all types of farms.

AgFA© allows for the use of profile data to create specific farm type benchmarks and provide information to assist farm managers in decision-making for improved profits and lifestyles.

AgFA© produces the following reports: Farm Earnings, Balance Sheet, Statement of Cash Flows and a Financial Analysis report which includes the rate of Return on Assets on both cost and fair market value basis. The program's reports include several accuracy checks and a labor analysis. AgFA© also has the capability of performing a variety of statistical analysis for research purposes.

Pricing dairy ration inputs in today's volatile markets

Otto Wiegand
 Area Ag Agent
 Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties
 Adapted from Matt Lippert, Wood County Ag Agent

Prices for corn and soybeans are determined at commodity exchanges, and local prices are announced daily in radio and print media. Prices for other commodities, notably hay, haylage and corn silage are not nearly as easy to determine. These feeds are bulky and may contain considerable extra moisture, making it expensive relative to their value to transport them large distances. Higher fuel prices have only increased this cost factor. In addition, while corn and soybeans are traded with a standard specification, forage crops can vary considerably in moisture, protein, fiber and other quality aspects.

Since forages are often sold between neighbors, other arrangements come into play. Forage is not always priced as a finished product delivered to our door. It may be sold as a standing crop, by the acre, or by the load. Possibly the seller may assist with ensiling, or maybe the buyer will provide the seller manure. There are many inputs to consider when determining a fair price. With the current high prices for commodities, it becomes more important that we get the price “right” for these feedstuffs.

A good place to start is to determine the value of the feedstuff as a finished product. Pricer and Feed Val4 are Excel spreadsheets developed by UW Dairy Scientists Randy Shaver and Terry Howard to value feedstuffs based on laboratory analysis and the cost of other feed options. Below are the *maximum* prices a dairy producer could spend for forage given the prices of other feedstuffs.

Table 1. Pricer Maximum Prices with \$6.00/ bu. corn, \$380/ ton for 46% soybean meal, and \$150/ton 150 RFQ hay (20% CP, 40% NDF)*

<u>Feedstuff</u>	<u>Dry Matter</u>	<u>CP</u>	<u>NDF</u>	<u>\$/ ton</u>
Haylage, bud	40	20	40	60
Haylage mature	40	14	55	49
Corn silage	35	8	45	50
Grass Hay	88	12	60	114

*Assumes \$20.00/ cwt. milk and 75 lbs/cow yield

FeedVal and Pricer can be found online at the UW Extension Forage Resources page: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/crops/uwforage/uwforage.htm>

You will need to have a forage test taken to fully utilize these spreadsheets. The next step is to accurately determine your unit of measure - are you buying bales? Besides the obvious weight differences between large round and small square bales, there can be considerable weight variation within a type of bale. Chopper box loads or estimated yields per acre will be improved if a weigh scale is utilized to get an estimate of weight.

To value a standing crop, yield will need to be estimated and the cost to harvest the crop deducted from the final value. The *Wisconsin Custom Rate Guide 2007* is a good reference and is available from DATCP, UW-Extension and online.

For anyone that has priced forages recently, the numbers seem wrong. It is difficult to imagine that prices that were stable for many years can suddenly more than double. On the other hand, without these increases, the return to an acre of forage will not be competitive with what is possible with grains or oilseeds. It is not only returns to alternative crops but also the cost of inputs that factor into this. The fertilizer value removed by a forage crop can easily be over \$100/ acre with today's fertilizer prices.

Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers

Frederic - 15 Sessions, Nov. - March

Thursdays 11:00 a.m - 1:15 p.m.

Otto Wiegand
Area Agricultural Agent
Burnett, Sawyer, & Washburn Counties

The Wisconsin School for Beginning Farmers course will be offered locally this fall and winter at the Frederic Village Hall. The course comes through the University of Wisconsin Farm and Industry Short Course. Delivery will be done through interactive video and audio. Most of the subject materials apply to both grass-based and conventional farming and cover dairy, beef, sheep and goats. An important aspect of the course is business planning. If desired, students will be able to develop their own business plans by the end of the course. Since the course began in 1995, 250 students have enrolled and a third have gone on to start their own farms.

There are 15 required regular class sessions and some opportunities for software training, tours or attendance at GrassWorks, depending on location. The course is divided into three terms. Classes run from 11:00 AM to 1:30 PM on Thursdays except for one class on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. Students who miss a class may catch it later on-line.

Subjects this year include starting a livestock business whether confinement or grazing, grazing system layout, stray voltage, goal-setting, feeding on pasture, production and marketing of pasture-based beef, goat and sheep dairying, information on beginner loans, enterprise budgets, farm-driven marketing, business plan writing, successful models for business startups, bio-fuels and farm energy, organic farming, low-cost parlors, out-wintering and environmental stewardship. A brochure for the course will be available shortly. Also watch for news releases in the papers.

The cost of the entire course is not yet established but it won't be more the \$240 charged last year. Sponsorships are encouraged. You can also enroll for individual classes or terms, or take the course for university credit at a higher cost. Additional afternoon sessions covering related topics of interest may be added by local UW-Extension. If there is a scheduling conflict with the current location, a few of the sessions may be held at UW-Extension in Balsam Lake or Siren. You will have to bring your own lunch.

The registration deadline is Nov. 3. To register or obtain further information, contact Otto Wiegand at UWEX Spooner at 715-635-3506, Ryan Sterry at UWEX Balsam Lake, 715-485-8600, Dick Cates at 608-265-6437, or Jennifer Taylor at 608-265-7914. The course is a collaborative effort between the UW-Center for Integrated Agricultural Studies, UW Cooperative Extension, CALS, DATCP, the Technical Colleges and GrassWorks.

This Quarter's Events

Contacts: Ag Agents Otto Wiegand or Kevin Schoessow, UW-Extension, Spooner Ag. Station, 715-635-3506, Tom Syverud, UW-Extension, Douglas, 715-395-1363 or Jason Fischbach, UW-Extension, Ashland/Bayfield, 715-682-8393 for more information, brochures, or how to register.

October 8 – Wednesday, 9:30-3:00 – Biomass Crops for Renewal Energy Workshop, Spooner – Spooner Ag. Research Station, \$10 includes lunch, for information / registration call 715-537-6250.

October 31, 2008 - High Tunnel Production for Beginning/ Medium Sized Commercial Growers - 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., free - UW-River Falls, registration deadline October 15. Contact: Juliet Tomkins, 715-425-3176.

November 2008 – March 2009 – Wisconsin School for Beginning Farmers, Frederic – application deadline Nov. 3, distance learning, includes pasture-based farm management for dairy, beef or small ruminants, farm start-ups, mentoring, business planning, rations and nutrition, milking center design.

November 6, 2008 - 2 p.m. - Grape Pruning Workshop, Spooner - Classroom and hands-on training. Bring your gloves and pruning shears. Spooner Ag Research Station.

December 5-6, 2008 - Connecting Threads - A Conference for Women Farmers and Farm Women, Chula Vista Resort, WI Dells, Call 1-800-942-2474 for more information

January 14, Wednesday, 10:00-3:00 – Dairy Road Show, UW-Barron County, Rice Lake. See article for more details.



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2008

Find ways to save money on the farm

Apply for grant funding for your operation

Learn strategies to make your farm business more profitable in tough economic times

Attend one of the many other agricultural trainings scheduled this winter

Kevin Schoessow
UWEX Area Agricultural Agent