

## Never too early to stop weeds

How much damage can weeds do early in the season? Really? The short answer is a lot. They weaken your corn's stand and ultimately lower your yield. If you think that's old information, well, you better pay attention to this new research.



Recent studies prove that weeds start to rob yield before corn is even 2" tall. And by 4", yield loss can easily top 10%. So even if you spray for weeds that early you're too late. The damage is done.

The best way to stop weeds from hurting your crop is with a preemergence program featuring LUMAX®. Why LUMAX? Because studies show that it has the highest performance you can get. Instead of repackaging the same old ingredients, its advanced chemistry outperforms any other preemergence herbicide. And postemergence applications of glyphosate just don't compare.

One pass of LUMAX can stop weeds before they ever see the light of day. Before they can steal the moisture and nutrients your corn needs to produce top yields.

It's simple. If you don't give weeds a chance you won't leave yield to chance. Nothing does both as well as LUMAX.



# Surveys seek policy input

By JOHN OTTE

**W**HAT were they thinking?" is the reaction some farmers have to certain policies coming from Washington and statehouses.

"It's none of their business!" is the reaction others have to government surveys seeking financial information from farms.

The two issues are related. Lawmakers will make policies that will impact farm finances, whether they have sound policy decision-making information or not.

Several factors intensify the problem. Most policy-makers do not have farm backgrounds. Many urban legislators have little on-farm experience. All legislators are busy. They depend on others for information. Well-financed activist groups readily supply lawmakers with information supporting their positions.

### Key Points

- USDA is surveying farmers on production input use and conservation practices.
- Data from all participants is critical to give policy-makers a clear view.
- USDA keeps responses from individual producers strictly confidential.

Agriculture has lobbyists, too. Having sound, unbiased facts can help farm advocates offset emotionalism of some activists.

### Many issues involve finance

Members of Congress often ask USDA for information on farm finances:

- How have higher energy input prices affected farm costs?
- How sensitive is farm income to cuts in government payments or changes in payment limits?

■ How much income do recreational uses of Conservation Reserve Program land generate?

■ Do value-enhanced corn varieties boost income for corn growers?

■ What effects will the changing structure of dairy production have on productivity, financial performance and manure management?

### Survey helps get answers

"USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service hopes to shed light on those questions with results from its Agricultural Resource Management survey," says Joe Prusacki, NASS state director for Iowa.

In late February, NASS will survey nearly 36,000 randomly selected U.S. farmers. They will provide data on operating expenditures, production costs and household descriptions. "All farm operators rely on quality information and sound government policies in order to run a business," says Greg Preston, director of the Indiana NASS office.

Every response is important to accurately represent your state's position among the rest of the nation.

"This survey gives farmers a chance to set the record straight about issues that affect them, such as fertilizer and energy use on crops," adds Prusacki. "Policy-makers, commodity analysts and producer organizations will use survey results to develop production practices that improve productivity on the farm, and ensure a safer, cleaner working environment for producers, their families and communities."

## NASS assures data gathered is confidential

**T**HE National Agricultural Statistics Service will notify farmers who have been selected to participate in their survey by mail. NASS staffers will conduct personal interviews at the farmer's convenience.

"We safeguard the confidentiality of all survey responses," says NASS' Joe Prusacki. "No data from individual producers are ever published. Data are only used in conjunction with information from other producers."

USDA will publish summary information on ag chemical usage plus commodity production costs and returns in a series of 2007 reports.

"The ARM survey is one way USDA and producers work together to provide meaningful, accurate and objective statistical information and services to keep U.S. agriculture and rural communities among the most robust in the world," adds Prusacki.

# Brave new agriculture arrives

### Guest Editorial

By TOM J. BECHMAN

**T**HE world changes every day, and so does agriculture. It's just that some changes have more impact than others. Tractors replaced horses in the 1940s and changed farming forever. The '70s brought fence-row-to-fence-row farming to "feed the world."

Agriculture was forced to take a breath in the '80s. Unfortunately, it was the end for some; but both land prices and many farmers proved resilient. Then the '90s brought technology, highlighted by Roundup Ready soybeans — a development so powerful that it drove huge ag companies out of business.

So where are we now? We could argue that farmers stand on the precipice of another time of tremendous change. Whether it's the route to an even higher mountain peak or the edge of a cliff remains unclear. Then again, the future is always unclear when real change approaches.

Here are five sectors worth watching in 2007. Any one of these could change how you farm forever.

**New energy age.** Biofuels certainly seem like they are past the fad stage. However, there are so many unanswered questions. Just how many ethanol plants can we support? How long before

consumers demand more E85 pumps? When will a critical mass of school corporations switch to B20 soy biodiesel blends, recognizing they're good for kids and the environment, even if they cost a couple pennies more?

**Ripple effect.** If the biofuels craze continues, how will you decide how much corn to raise? Is continuous corn worth it if prices are high enough? How will you store extra corn? Who will feed all the distillers grain? Will hog producers learn how to handle them? Will local feed mills still exist?

**Whole new industry.** Visionaries talk about cellulosic biofuel as the future. That is "brave new world" thinking, since the technology commercially is still iffy at best. Are we ready to base the future on a process that's still in testing? Will the farmer's biggest investment someday lie in big balers and transport trucks instead of combines?

**Genetic breakthroughs.** Monsanto says they're zeroing in on drought-resistant corn and soybeans with healthy omega-3 fatty acids. These aren't just *Bt* corn borer traits or waxy hybrids; these traits could raise yields to new levels for corn, while turning demand for soybeans upside down. Other companies — notably Pioneer, Syngenta and Dow AgroSciences — are also developing equally eye-popping technologies.

**Precision breakthroughs.** Hovercraft harvest corn in a wild, high-school

"imagine the future" project: Is it so wild? Just how far away is farming by remote control, sitting in your office in front of a display board resembling an airplane cockpit? The technology for tractors to farm alone is here now. The question is: Are you ready?

So what will the future look like? We don't know. Yet we believe historians will look back at the first decade of the 21st century and say, "That's when agriculture really changed." Let's hope it is change for the better, and that each of you finds your spot in agriculture's "brave new world."

### Rubes



"Good news, Mrs. Potato Head! The surgery was a complete success. Your husband will remain a total vegetable for the rest of his life."