

Federal crop deadline nears

MICHIGAN producers of 14 spring-planted crops have until March 15 to sign up for federally subsidized crop insurance. This is also the deadline to make any changes to existing policies.

As producers wonder about how trade negotiations will affect government programs, one thing seems clear: Crop insurance subsidies are nearly completely in the "green box" protected from whatever the results of international agreements.

Key Points

- Time to buy federally subsidized crop insurance for spring-planted crops is now.
- International trade rules put most crop insurance subsidies in the "green box."
- Check with your crop insurance agent for insurance details for crops you grow.

Many producers may be thinking about that as they make their risk-management plans this year.

The 14 insurable crops, which share the March 15 deadline, are: oats, forage seeding, sugarbeets, corn, popping corn, canning beans, beans, hybrid seed corn, green peas, cabbage, soybeans, potatoes, tomatoes and barley.

Not every crop is insurable in every county.

Producers wanting to sign up for crop insurance, or those who wish to make changes to their existing policies, must contact a crop insurance agent before the March 15 deadline.

Crop Briefs

70th corn hybrid test released
The Michigan State University 2005 hybrid test results, which are now available online, were put into the 70th report of its kind. The corn hybrid trials occur on farms across Michigan and provide growers with information to make informed decisions on hybrid selection. The 2005 program evaluated the performance of more than 500 hybrids for grain and corn silage yields at 13 grain trial sites and nine silage test locations. Trial results are available at www.css.msu.edu/varietytrials. For more information on the MSU corn variety trials, contact your county MSU Extension office or visit www.msue.msu.edu.

Soybean report available
Farmers thinking about soybean varieties for the 2006 growing season have a new edition of a familiar tool to use in making their planting decisions: the Michigan State University Soybean Variety Trial Performance Report. The report is based on results of soybean trials conducted in nine lower Michigan counties and grouped by three maturity zones. It includes performance evaluations of soybean varieties developed by private companies and by the MSU soybean breeding program. The Soybean Variety Trial Performance Report is available online at www.css.msu.edu/varietytrials. It also is available from any MSU Extension office (bulletin number E2947) or from the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee.

Shenandoah pear tastes great and resists fire blight
The sweet and juicy Shenandoah pear boasts an appealing taste and texture and stores well — if properly chilled for about four months. It fends off attack by fire blight, a major bacterial disease of pears. Shenandoah can be grown in all pear-producing regions of the United States but will be especially desirable in areas where fire blight is prevalent: the East, Southeast and Midwest. There Shenandoah trees are ready to harvest from mid- to late September. Scientists at the ARS Appalachian Fruit Research Station in Kearneysville, W.Va., put Shenandoah through about 20 years of rigorous testing before making it available to plant breeders and others in 2004.

Find government programs on the Internet

If you are a farmer or agriculture professional looking for government financial assistance, you no longer have to search endless government Web sites for the right program. The official benefits Web site of the U.S. government, govbenefits.gov, includes more than 25 programs directed at farmers and ranchers. The site provides information on more than 1,000 government benefit assistance programs to people in all walks of life and is available in both English and Spanish. For more information, e-mail govbenefits@dol.gov.

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