

No early CRP release

ACTING USDA Secretary Chuck Conner says his agency will not offer penalty-free early releases from Conservation Reserve Program contracts this fall. He says early releases are not needed with a record U.S. corn crop being harvested this year.

"Also, the United States had slightly higher-than-expected stocks for corn and soybeans on hand in early September, at the start of the current 2007-08 crop marketing year," Conner adds. "In addition, on Sept. 30, 2 million CRP acres under ex-

isting contracts expired." He expects market signals to attract adequate acres for various crop needs.

"Wheat, soybean and corn prices are providing very strong incentives to plant more acreage this fall and next spring," he says. "Throughout the past year, the market focused on attracting corn acres. Farmers responded accordingly, with U.S. corn acres in 2007 increasing to their highest level since 1944."

Conner says he does not expect USDA to offer general

CRP sign-up while grain stock levels remain historically low and prices continue at unprecedented high levels. But the continuous CRP sign-up option is another matter.

Acres under the continuous CRP sign-up, such as filter strips and riparian buffers, are not affected by USDA's general sign-up decisions, he explains. Enrollment of acres that qualify for sign-up in the continuous CRP option is ongoing.

Testifying before the U.S. House Ag Committee in late October, USDA Chief Economist

Keith Collins said there are good reasons for some farmers to take some land out of CRP.

"Most of the land in CRP is in wheat country," says Collins. "And the kind of wheat prices we are looking at right now, such as \$8.50 a bushel for December delivery, are extraordinary."

"I think that kind of a wheat price would encourage people who don't have extremely environmentally sensitive land to exit the CRP and go back in to wheat production."

Collins doesn't expect the wheat price to stay at \$8.50, but in the \$5 to \$6 range it is going to be very attractive for an awful lot of land that is currently in the CRP to be planted to wheat, he notes.

What about corn and soybeans? Those prices this fall have been high, too. Will more land be pulled out of CRP and planted to those crops? Collins doesn't really foresee that happening. While Collins does see some CRP land being brought back into crop production, mainly for wheat planting, he believes much of the CRP land will remain in the program.

Organic event coming to ISU

THE demand for organic crops continues to exceed supply, and growers everywhere are encouraged to consider the potential for organic production.

This year's Iowa Organic Conference will be held Nov. 19 at the Scheman Building at Iowa State University. The conference will include multiple sessions on organic livestock production taught by farmers who have successfully managed their animal systems. Also covered will be the production of local foods, including marketing options for beginning growers.

In addition, there will be presentations on organic grains, vegetables, herbs, fruits, soil health and incentives to get you started or enhance your marketing skills. A trade show of 30 vendors featuring organic products and services will be held during the conference.

■ For registration or more information on ISU's Organic Agriculture program, go to extension.agron.iastate.edu/organicag.

New report on biomass

THE Council for Agricultural Science and Technology has released a new report, "Convergence of Agriculture and Energy: II. Producing Cellulosic Biomass for Biofuels." "Current biofuel production in the United States relies primarily on conversion of corn grain to ethanol, but future systems are expected to depend more extensively on plant biomass," says Steve Fales, associate director of the

Office of Biorenewables at Iowa State University and task force chairman.

"In addition, current cropping systems generally are designed to optimize grain production and aren't designed to harvest all the aboveground portion of the plant for cellulose-containing biomass," notes Fales. "Significant, immediate national investments are needed, along with changes in policy, to address challenges limiting the

sustainable production and efficient use of cellulosic biomass as a fuel feedstock to meet anticipated U.S. demand."

The new report covers critical questions, including:

- What issues should be evaluated in a realistic appraisal of current and future feedstock supplies?
- What production methods should be used to maximize agronomic systems?
- What crops should be developed for biomass?

The full report is online at www.cast-science.org.

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Mike Owen
Iowa State University

The Roundup Ready* Corn 2 System was planted on approximately 50 million acres this season – making it the leading weed-control program in U.S. agriculture.

Iowa State University Extension weed specialist and professor of agronomy Mike Owen offers the

following advice for growers who use a rotation of Roundup Ready Corn 2 and Roundup Ready Soybeans to achieve effective weed control and minimize the chance of weed resistance on their farms:

- Timely weed control is critical to achieving effective weed management. Correct application timing needs to be used to control weeds efficiently and effectively. Remember, the objective of weed management is to protect potential crop yield by removing weeds before they begin to compete with the crop. Timely application of herbicides is also a good stewardship practice against weed population shifts and weed resistance development.

- Know which weeds you have in your fields and which ones are the most problematic to control. Understand weed-emergence patterns and use this information to plan weed-management tactics.
- Use a pre followed by a post herbicide system in both Roundup Ready Corn 2 and Roundup Ready Soybeans to more effectively and consistently control weeds. Doing so enables better control of early-germinating weeds, which are potentially the most damaging to crop yields, and may help reduce the chances of weeds evolving resistance to glyphosate. This strategy minimizes the initial weed pressure, which increases the "window of opportunity" for a timely post application that will better protect potential crop yields.
- Use full, labeled rates of glyphosate. Recommended label rates are set by determining what levels will give the best weed control in most circumstances. Using lower rates can result in variable control and success.

Always read and follow pesticide label directions. Roundup Ready* crops contain genes that confer tolerance to glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup* agricultural herbicides. Roundup agricultural herbicides will kill crops that are not glyphosate tolerant. Monsanto Imagine* and the Vine Design, Roundup* and Roundup Ready* are registered trademarks of Monsanto Technology LLC. ©2007 Monsanto Company. [31728-22 WF-FP tip 10/07]

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