COMBO Crop Insurance Meetings Aid Producers

Protecting the producer’s margin has become more difficult in today’s volatile agricultural environment. With higher grain prices and input cost, the price and production risk to producers has increased six fold making crop insurance an increasingly important tool for Iowa producers in managing risk. In an effort to offer producers better risk management tools, USDA’s Risk Management Agency has made several changes in the crop insurance policies available to producers. In recent months, ISU Extension offered a series of five state-wide meetings designed to not only explain coverage changes and encourage producers to work with decision tools, but to also develop their skills to make informed crop insurance decisions. William Edwards, extension farm management specialist, helped farmers make better informed decisions and select the proper crop insurance product to best manage their individual risk in several program sessions during February and early March. By applying the knowledge and skills gained in the workshop, producers are better equipped to protect their margins and foster a profitable and viable farm business.

Employee Management Workshops Boost Efficiency

During February 2011, Iowa State University Extension (ISUE) sponsored two Employee Management Workshops in eastern Iowa. The educational programs at Little Amana and Calmar, sponsored by the North Central Region Risk Management Education Agency and ISUE, helped agricultural employers look for new methods to improve employee performance, reduce risk concerns, and improve overall operation productivity. At each program, workshop participants had the opportunity to explore a number of specific topics, including operation labor needs, feedback and communication, and compensation and benefits options, among many others. The workshops presented relevant ideas and concepts that ag-related employers can implement to improve their employee management system. The techniques outlined during the workshops are designed to have a positive direct impact on both the employer and the employee.

Universities Collaborate in the 2011 Tri-State Ag Summit

ISU Extension teamed up with the University of Illinois, Western Illinois University and the University of Missouri to present the 2011 Tri-state Agricultural Summit on February 16. The inaugural Tri-State Agriculture Summit attracted more than 100 individuals, including farmers, land owners, agri-businesses and local processors. Attendees heard from a diverse set of keynote speakers, including Mike Duffy, ISU Extension economist, Melvin Brees, University of Missouri agricultural economist, Keith Fuller, president of Fuller Fertilizer, and Gordon Roskamp, Western Illinois University. The presentations covered land value outlooks, techniques on herbicides and pest management, insight into the volatile grain market of the past year and interpreting yield maps to maximum crop yield and profit.
Seminars Perfect Dairy Herd Management Practices
ISU Extension, in partnership with area milk, veterinary, nutrition, and milk equipment associates, hosted 13 on-farm workshops across the state to anticipate the upcoming major changes in milk quality standards. The educational workshops focused on dairy herd management practices that lead to improved cow health and milk quality. Leo Timms, Ph.D., ISU Extension dairy specialist and recognized expert on udder health topics, started the discussion at each farm. Producers visited five stations during the workshop including the milking center and housing areas. Workshop instructors emphasized the importance of adhering to the ABC’s in the cows’ environment: air quality, bunk space along with good nutrition, and comfortable, clean stables. Workshop participants also took home practical skills such as body condition scoring, analyzing cow comfort, and techniques for proper milk quality evaluation. By working closely with milk producers, processors and regulators, ISU Extension helps ensure the manufacturing of safe and wholesome dairy products.

Food and Farm Expo Features Online Marketing
Northeast Iowa farmers gathered to listen to Andy Larson, ISU Extension small farms specialist, talk about online marketing for local producers at the first Northeast Iowa Food & Farm Expo in Calmar on Feb. 5. The event, hosted by Iowa State University Extension, NICC and the Northeast Iowa Food & Farm (NIFF) Coalition, attracted more than 150 people. The NIFF Coalition is part of the Northeast Iowa Food & Fitness Initiative—a partner of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Food & Community program. The coalition is creating opportunities for farmers to engage in the local food system through production, processing, distribution, storage and market opportunities. For more information, visit www.iowafreshfood.com.

Ag Market Outlook Helps Producers Prepare For Growing Season
The 2011 Ag Market Outlook Seminars in Cedar Rapids and Hills offered an opportunity for targeted discussions on the upcoming year’s unpredictable weather patterns, volatile markets and rising input costs that will challenge producers in 2011. The seminars featured Elwynn Taylor, ISU Climatologist, who discussed the 2010 weather patterns and what may lie ahead in 2011; Chad Hart, ISU Economist, who shared the latest supply and demand figures impacting the grain markets and provided 2011 price projections; and Shane Ellis, ISU Economist, who discussed livestock production numbers and the impact of the high grain prices. More than 300 producers, lenders and agri-business professionals took part.

Meet Terry Basol, ISU Extension Field Agronomist
Farmers, agribusinesses and crop professionals have a new Iowa State University Extension resource in Northeast Iowa. In November, Terry Basol started as the new ISU Extension field agronomist for the region, based at the Borlaug Learning Center on the ISU Northeast Research and Demonstration Farm near Nashua. Basol’s role includes developing relationships with ISU Corn and Soybean Initiative partners in northeast Iowa, providing outreach to area farmers and crop professionals through agronomic consultations, organizing field days, and conducting meetings and training sessions. “Ever since I graduated college and started working in the agriculture field, I have enjoyed being able to convey information and teach growers how to better their operations,” Basol said. Before joining Iowa State, Basol worked as a regional sales agronomist at the Milford, Iowa, location of Green Plains Grain Company in Everly. He earned bachelor’s degrees in science and agronomy at North Dakota State University, subsequently working as an agronomist with Hunter Grain Co. in North Dakota’s Red River Valley before moving on to agronomy positions in South Dakota and northwest Iowa. Basol can be reached at (641) 435-4864 or e-mail tlbasol@iastate.edu.

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