Staying for the Long Haul: Benton County Wind Event

When severe weather two days before the county fair resulted in extensive property and crop damage, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach took action, dealing with immediate clean-up, as well as bringing together farmers to discuss the crop and livestock situation and emergency programs available. ISU Extension and Outreach has remained involved in cleaning up storm damage, solving grain storage issues, and dealing with issues as they arise.

In the early morning hours of July 11, eastern Iowa was hit by a derecho, a windstorm with hurricane force straight-line winds, which flattened more than 100,000 acres of corn, snapped off thousands of trees, blew down grain bins and tore roofs off buildings. Winds were clocked at more than 120 mph in Vinton. The path of destruction stretched from south of Ames, through Tama, Benton, Linn and Jones counties up to Dubuque.

Surveys done by ISU Extension field agronomists on July 11 and 12, determined that the vast majority of the corn was flattened by root lodging and not greensnap, which meant the corn would partially straighten back out and not result in a complete loss.

More than 100 people attended a wind disaster meeting about the John Olson farm near Vinton on July 14. ISU Extension and Outreach helped producers anticipate potential problems caused by the storm damage. Recommendations for how to harvest the corn were shared through various forms of traditional and online media. At the end of the season, farmers reported that although harvesting the corn was difficult and took extra time, the corn yields were still good.

While most of the corn recovered from the storm, ISU Extension and Outreach disaster response continued with an emergency grain storage program for farmers and elevator managers in August addressing emergency grain storage options.

In addition to crops, homes and trees were also severely damaged. Communities in Dysart, Garrison, Clutier, Garwin and Vinton had extensive tree damage. Again, ISU Extension responded to the need for education by organizing meetings in partnership with Trees Forever and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.

Learn more about the ways ISU Extension and Outreach anticipates issues, acts as a catalyst for change, and stays around for the long haul through our commitment to healthy people, healthy environments, and healthy economies. [www.extension.iastate.edu/annualreport]
Protecting the Environment with Proper Manure Application

Improper or over application of manure can lead to many environmental problems. Some problems include excess nutrient loss in surface waters, runoff carrying sediment and organic material and spills of manure directly entering surface water. Large livestock producers need continuing instruction credits in order to renew their manure applicator permits. Manure Applicator Certification meetings conducted at 20 locations in southeast Iowa during January and February of last year reached 354 producers. In addition to updates on rules and land application, information was provided to participants on manure sampling and testing along with practices to better utilize the nitrogen in the manure.

Evaluations showed 83 percent of respondents planned to delay manure applications to reduce nitrogen loss. Also, as a result of past training sessions, 73 percent reported taking manure samples for nutrient analysis and using the results to adjust application rates. These actions will reduce the risk of excess nutrients entering surface water of shallow groundwater. Even though most producers came for their applicator certification, 91 percent indicated they received information that was useful for their farm operation.

Southeast Research Farm Benefits Local Economy

To find solutions to problems in each area and to study the impacts of regional differences, the Iowa Agriculture Experiment Station puts researchers in the fields of research farms across Iowa. The true beneficiary of the Southeast Research and Demonstration Farm (near Crawfordsville), and the public funds used to conduct research at the farm, has been the consumer in the form of lower prices, improved health, and an improved environment.

Some of the ways the research farm benefits the local economy includes:

- Using by-products from local millers to fertilize the land, resulting in less material going to local landfills, positively impacting our environment and freeing tax dollars for other uses.
- Research on tiling in southeast Iowa resulted in new companies being formed to do tiling. This translates into new jobs, new investments being made, and higher yields for farmers investing in tiling.
- Research has resulted in nitrogen fertilizer management practices and strategies aimed at limiting the loss of nitrogen. The public benefits with cleaner water, lower food costs, and fewer tax dollars spent on regulating the use of nitrogen.
- Research and field demonstrations on selecting pesticides which are safe for the applicator and the environment lead to increased yields, reduced food costs, and an increase in the number of local jobs.
- Energy research with grain and cellulosic ethanol feedstuffs and windbreaks will help the public lower heating and cooling costs, thus reducing dependence on imported fuels.

Southeast Iowa Local Food System Development

Local food system development involves building supply (finding local growers who want to sell their food products), building demand (educating consumers and buyers about the advantages of purchasing locally grown food), and building the infrastructure to make it happen efficiently. The balance of building capacity while the market grows is a difficult one, but one that more and more southeast Iowa governmental and institutional groups are becoming involved in. ISU Extension and Outreach staff have been involved in a number of local foods projects ranging from marketing workshops for vendors at farmers’ markets to educational opportunities related to extending the growing season. Community visioning and food-based business development training have also been part of the outreach efforts. Look for more to come as interest continues to grow and the local food system continues to develop.