Manage Farm Finances during Changing Financial Climate

U.S. corn and soybean producers have enjoyed their best run of returns in history over the last seven years. But like most things that go up, crop prices and returns are likely to decline in the near future. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach farm management specialists remind producers that agricultural returns tend to be cyclical in nature, and a few years of good returns are followed by a few years of negative returns.

The ISU Extension and Outreach farm management team of Kelvin Leibold, Tim Eggers, Kristen Schulte and Ann Johanns has developed two programs to help producers manage changes in financial climate and learn how to protect their financial bottom line during years of negative returns. One program is a day-long look at the impact of changes to farm finances; the other program is a multi-session financial literacy training. Program educators are Leibold, Eggers and Schulte.

“The USDA marketing year average for corn in 2012 was $6.89; predictions going forward are showing a price closer to $4.50,” said Kelvin Leibold. “Soybeans show a similar story, going from $14.40 in 2012 to $12.15. Producers need to consider where they will be when high prices leave.”

Tim Eggers recommends producers attend the programs to assess their financial health, and agri-businesses send their clientele so they can see how a financial analysis applies to their farm operation.

Deep Water or High Tide

This financial program will be offered at three locations in February. The northeast Iowa location is at the Northeast Iowa Community College Center in Cresco on Feb. 24.

Program participants will learn how changes to interest rates and other input costs affect their net farm income, and how to manage these changes. The program consists of a day engaged in the game of farm
finances. Participants will gain a greater knowledge of a true-to-life financial picture by taking part in a case study simulation. Extension team leaders will guide participants as they work together through the basics of having a solid financial foundation.

The program begins at 9:30 a.m. and wrap-up at 3:30 p.m. Registration is $25. To register, contact Howard County Extension Office, 563-547-3001.

Moving Beyond the Basics
This multi-session program for women focuses on financial literacy and takes learning to a deeper level. Moving Beyond the Basics is modeled after the nationwide Annie’s Project for Farm and Ranch Women.

“This program will give women the opportunity to evaluate record keeping systems and test-drive accounting software in a classroom setting,” said Kristin Schulte. “Knowing the resources available for analyzing your financial position will make you better able to ride periods of low prices and farm income.”

This program will be offered at the Chickasaw County Extension Office in New Hampton on Tuesday Evenings; Jan. 28 – Feb. 18; 6 - 9 p.m. Contact Danielle Day at 641-394-2174 or Kristen Schulte at 563-547-3001 for more information.

Visit the Ag Decision Maker website for further details, www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/.

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News Release
Contact: Tammy Curley, Bremer County Extension, 319-882-4275, tcurley@iastate.edu

Dairy Iowa Profitability Team Established

Iowa dairy farm operations need to be profitable and today have access to many on-farm services to aid them with management and technology issues. Sometimes a dairy producer can have a challenge with a certain farm practice, or perhaps they want to take their operation to the next level. These may require a team management approach of their key dairy suppliers. With these in mind, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, plus several industry partners, have created the Dairy Iowa Profitability Team.

So how does this work? Let’s say a dairy producer sees a potential need for this program. They should contact their area’s Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Dairy Specialist to discuss their operation’s need or challenge. They can help determine how best to proceed with helping the operation, either individually, or assist with creating a Dairy Iowa Profitability Team. There are three ISU Extension Dairy Specialists. Covering Northwest Iowa is Kevin Lager 715-737-4230, klager@iastate.edu. For Northeast Iowa the contact is Jenn Bentley at 563-382-2949, jbentley@iastate.edu. Larry Tranel covers East-Central and Southeastern Iowa and his contact is 563-583-6496, tranel@iastate.edu.

A Dairy Iowa Profitability Team would comprise of the dairy producers choice of their key farm suppliers plus key employees/family members. This could include their nutritionist, veterinarian, reproduction and genetics suppliers, key herdspersons, etc. Working as a team with input from the dairy producer, they would evaluate the herd’s records to determine key challenges and roadblocks. Then together come up with management ideas and practices to help improve the farms bottom line profitability.

Iowa’s dairy industry figures show 209,000 milk cows, which ranks seventh nationally in the number of dairy farms. Surveys list the total economic impact of $23,445 per cow. It’s estimated that the dairy industry contributes $4.9 billion annually to the state’s economy.

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News Release
Contact: Jenn Bentley, Extension Dairy Field Specialist, 563-382-2949, or jbentley@iastate.edu and
On-Farm Calf Workshops Feature Precision Management

With costs of raising heifers higher than their current market value if sold, precision management is needed as there are many ways to add value to these heifers before they join the milking string. On-farm calf workshops will allow a first-hand look at how fellow dairy farmers are housing pre-weaned calves and using technology, especially pasteurizers and automatic calf feeders to help manage their calf program.

Eight farm tours have been scheduled in eastern Iowa.

- Feb. 10, 10:30 am: Kevin and Gayleen Moellers Farm, Ridgeway. Auto-feeders utilizing pasteurized milk in a cross-ventilated facility. At 1:30 pm: Paul and Jody Stempfle Farm, Maynard. New calf barn utilizing milk taxi.

A full list of workshops with addresses and driving directions can be found at: [www.extension.iastate.edu/dairyteam](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/dairyteam). Each of these workshops is open to the public, no pre-registration is required.

Workshops are sponsored by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach and North Central Risk Management Education Center. If you’d like to attend the workshop or would like more information contact Jenn Bentley at jbentley@iastate.edu or 563-382-2949.

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News Release

Contact: Julie Christensen, Allamakee ISU Extension & Outreach, 563-568-6345, juliechr@iastate.edu

ISU Extension and Outreach Hosting Free Course on Shopping for Health Insurance

With less than 9 weeks remaining to meet requirements for having health insurance, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach is offering a free workshop to help Allamakee county and surrounding area residents understand how to make smart choices for purchasing health care coverage. The workshop will take place Tuesday, February 11, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. at the YMCA in Postville. The program will be delivered using both English and Spanish materials.

Through the Smart Choice Health Insurance workshop, attendees will:

- Understand how to calculate the cost of health insurance plans;
- Learn how to understand which health care providers participate in various plans;
- Find out whether they may qualify for tax credits or cost sharing assistance to pay for coverage;
- Use a guide and a tool for identifying their own health insurance needs and priorities;
- Be able to compare different plans available through the Health Insurance Marketplace; and
- Learn how to purchase coverage at healthcare.gov.

“This workshop will help people choose coverage that best fits their family’s budget and health care needs and use that plan efficiently once enrolled,” says Cindy Thompson, family life/family finance program specialist with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

The Smart Choice Health Insurance Program is made possible by funding from a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services grant.
For information about the local Health Insurance Marketplace workshop February 11, contact the Allamakee ISU Extension and Outreach office at 563-568-6345, visit www.extension.iastate.edu/allamakee, or contact Cindy Thompson at 641-229-6655, cpthom08@iastate.edu

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News Release
Contact: Jesse Randall, ISU Extension Forestry, 515-294-1168, randallj@iastate.edu

Annual Forest Stewardship Conference Is March 8
The 2014 Tri-State Forest Stewardship Conference is Saturday, March 8 at Sinsinawa Mound Center, Sinsinawa, Wis. This is the 20th year for the conference, which annually draws 500 woodland landowners from Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa.

According to Jesse Randall, Iowa State University Extension forester, “It has become one of the largest private woodland owner conferences in the nation. The conference regularly fills to capacity, so those interested in participating are encouraged to register early to secure their place and receive the ‘Early Bird’ registration discount.”

More than 25 presentations will cover a wide range of topics focusing on private woodland owners, including, timber marketing in today’s economy, tree felling, tree pruning, timber stand improvement, tree ID, forest interior birds, oak decline in the tri-state region, common tree pests and how to treat them, invasive plant ID and control options and a whole host of other topics. Online registration is available and can be found on the main ISU Forestry Extension Website under the Tri-State Forestry Heading here: http://www.extension.iastate.edu/forestry/ or directly here: http://extension.illinois.edu/go/forestconference Participants will have the opportunity to interact with state and federal forest managers, as well as to see the most recent advances in forestry technology at the vendors fair.

“This year, there will once again be a two-hour fruit tree grafting workshop,” Randall said. “Enrollment for the fruit tree grafting workshop will be limited to the first 25 individuals and will only be available through online registration.” Participants in this workshop will be able to take home the 5 grafted apple trees on certified rootstocks.

Additional conference information and the online registration portal can be found at www.extension.iastate.edu/forestry, including all the conference talks, presenter bio’s and printable registration materials will be available for mail in registration.

Randall encouraged woodland owners to take advantage of the Early Bird Registration Discount. The adult registration fee is $45 per person on or before Feb. 14 and $55 per person after that date. The fee includes a continental breakfast, buffet luncheon, refreshments, resource packet and handouts.

The deadline to receive the registrations is February 28. Advance registration is required; no walk-in registrations on the day of the conference will be allowed. Participation is limited to 550; so early registration is encouraged and will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.

The conference is presented in partnership with the Cooperative Extension Services at Iowa State University and University of Illinois; the Department of Natural Resources from each of the three states; the Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management at Iowa State University; and the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The Sinsinawa Mound Center is located in Wisconsin, a few miles east of Dubuque, Iowa.

For more information, contact Jesse Randall at 515-294-1168 or send email to randallj@iastate.edu.
For information about local Extension events and programs, contact:

Allamakee: Julie Christensen, 563-568-6345, juliechr@iastate.edu
Chickasaw: Danielle Day, 641-394-2174, daday@iastate.edu
Clayton: Rita Severson, 563-245-1451, ritas@iastate.edu
Fayette: Kathy Steege, 563-425-3331, kstege@iastate.edu
Howard: Sue Barnes, 563-547-3001, skbarnes@iastate.edu
Winnebago: Carrie Courtney, 563-382-2949, ccourt@iastate.edu

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