

Central Wisconsin Agricultural Extension Report



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Volume 14, Issue 3

July 2011

Farmers Markets in the United States By: Nav Ghimire

Inside this issue:

<i>Importance of Written Leases</i>	2
<i>Alfalfa, No Apologies Needed</i>	3
<i>Rolling Soybeans Featured at JAM Field Day</i>	5
<i>Be Sure to Visit Farm Technology Days July 12 through 14</i>	6
<i>Beef Cattlemen's Cook-out</i>	7
<i>Stockpiling Forage for Grazing at a Later Time</i>	8
<i>Calendar Of Events</i>	9
<i>News Release: USDA Feds Feed Families Initiative</i>	9

In most cities and towns of the United States, farmers markets have been a part of the citizen's life. These markets are popular for low cost, fresh, and healthier foods. As an agriculture agent, I believe that we should know a little bit more about the features of farmers markets in the U.S.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), in mid-2009 there were 5,274 operating farmers markets in the United States, representing increases of 13% during the previous year, 42% during the previous 5 years, 84% since the turn of the century (2000), and 200% during the previous 15 years. Consumer demand for local and sustainable foods has contributed to this increase, as has the opportunity for consumers to understand where their food comes from and to interact with farmers and food producers locally. Agricultural census data show that in 2007, farmers sold \$1.2 billion of food directly to consumers through farmers markets, farm stands, or other venues, up from \$812 million in 2002, representing a 49% increase over those 5 years. In 2005, farmers markets alone were estimated to have almost \$1 billion in sales.

"Buying local" is a rapidly growing trend in Wisconsin and throughout the United States. Buying local foods has been a great concern for those who care about where their food comes from and who are committed to buying locally-grown and produced food. However, these trends are not isolated to consumer kitchens; in fact, locally-grown and produced foods are being utilized at many hospitals, health facilities, foodservice operations as well as at school and college operations.

According to the most recent USDA National Farmers Market Manager Survey, an average of almost 1,000 customers per market were reported for farmers markets across the United States, with year-round and seasonal markets reporting an average of 3,622 and 601 customers, respectively. Although some markets are open year-round (12%), the majority of farmers markets are seasonal, operating fewer than 6 months per year. During the 2005 season, farmers markets open fewer than 6 months per year served 565 customers weekly and had gross monthly sales of almost \$21,000. Farmers Markets open 7 months or more served 942 customers weekly and had gross monthly sales of more than \$57,000. Year-round markets served 3,578 customers weekly and grossed almost \$70,000 in monthly sales. These findings show that the more days a farmer's market is open, the higher the number of consumers it serves with higher gross sales. These findings also indicate there is an increasing interest of the U.S. citizen buying locally grown foods from the farmers market.

Many would agree that a farmer's market is the important source for healthy and inexpensive local foods. However, more research is needed in these areas to

(Continued on page 2)

explore the understanding of how to improve access to and usage of farmers markets by Americans. Consumers utilize farmers markets and buy locally-grown and produced food for a variety of reasons. According to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, farmers markets improve access to locally-grown, farm-fresh produce by consumers while enabling growers and producers to have the opportunity to develop a personal relationship with their customers and to cultivate consumer loyalty.

A national consumer survey conducted in 2006 explored local, fresh produce consumer motivations and interests to better understand the shopping behaviors of participants. Overall, for 30% of consumers, fresh produce was primarily purchased at farmers markets (25%) or directly from a farmer/producer (5%). Secondary purchase locations of choice for 15% of consumers were also farmers markets (12%) and a direct-from-farmer/producer purchase (3%). Consumers who utilized these outlets not only valued the produce variety available (including unique varieties and cultivars from growers and producers) compared with traditional supermarkets and other outlets, but their choices were also motivated by wanting to support local producers. These findings indicate that American consumers seem to have a strong connection to local food systems.

Farmers markets have the potential to improve access to and utilization of fresh produce by communities. Further studies and timely reviews are needed especially in low-income communities, to elucidate the benefits of farmers markets on nutrition- and health-related outcomes, such as dietary intake and weight status, as well as outcomes not related to nutrition and health, including community-building, civic engagement, and economic development.

The local health care providers, medical colleges, registered dietitians (RDs) and dietetic technicians, registered (DTRs) can contribute to promote utilization of farmers markets and other aspects of the local food system in their practices. Encouragement of the use of farmers markets can be accomplished when providing dietary guidance to patients and clients; working on community nutrition-related projects; developing nutrition- and dietetics-related courses for dietetics students; and procuring, preparing, and serving food for school, health, and other foodservice operations. The specific strategies include development of a local farmer's market directory for your practice or clinic, development of programs for clients that highlight your local market (e.g., a farmer's market tour), development of a community garden plot or edible landscape garden near your facility in collaboration with local farmers associations and UW-Extension. In conclusion, farmers markets have the potential of being an avenue for optimizing the health of Americans and promoting the local economy. For more information please contact Nav Ghimire, agriculture agent, Green Lake County UW-Extension at nav.ghimire@ces.uwex.edu or call at 920-294-4032. *(This article was adapted from the Journal of the American Dietetic Association)*

Importance of Written Leases

By: Ken Williams

In agriculture today more and more farmers are renting land owned by others as a way of securing sufficient land to operate efficiently. All businesses including a farm business makes long term business decisions based on size of operation. Investments in equipment are long term and are made based on estimated use based on a given farm size. Investments in capital equipment need to be made based on the knowledge that the size of a farm operation will remain sufficient to justify that investment.

It has long been a custom for farmers to operate with simply verbal agreements. The old adage that a person's word was as good as his name may not be the best way to operate in our world today. A large portion of land today may be owned by absentee landowners or by people who have no agricultural

(Continued on page 3)

background. The increased challenge of operating a business profitably has resulted in many cases where the potential for additional income from a higher offer for rent has caused a landowner to ignore an earlier verbal agreement with someone else.

This area of the state poses some unique challenges for those who might want to operate only through the use of verbal contracts. There are a number of farms that are very low in pH and nutrient levels which may require a large outlay of dollars for lime and the extra fertilizer that may be required to bring the soil test levels up to an optimum level. The cost of lime alone could be over \$100 per acre. Lime is a long term investment that has a lasting value for as long as five years. We also have situations where a producer may rent a piece of land and decide to put in a well and irrigation system. To put in a system to cover 80 acres has a cost today of over \$80,000. In both of these situations we have money spent on a capital item that is immobile in the event that a disagreement occurs or the land is leased to another party.

In Wisconsin, oral leases for a year or less are enforceable. Wisconsin law requires that a lease for more than a year is not enforceable unless it is in writing and it meets certain requirements. A written agreement will clearly define the specifics of each agreement. For producers who invest funds in upgrading land through the application of lime or fertilizer or who may make an investment in irrigation a lease can spell out an amount to be paid by the landowner in the event of a situation where the lease is cancelled or terminated.

Advantages of a written agreement include: a detailed statement of the agreement which ensures better understanding by both parties; a reminder of the terms originally agreed upon; and a valuable guide for heirs if either the tenant or the landowner dies. Without a written agreement to refer to, a court may have to decide what the agreement between parties was or is. Because of the numerous areas of potential disagreement, a rental arrangement should be approached with the same degree of seriousness that a land purchase would entail. A written agreement defining the responsibilities of the parties will force the parties to consider what is fair and serve to avoid disputes at a later date. If you have any questions about a lease you are asked to sign, it is best to consult an attorney before signing.

Alfalfa, No Apologies Needed By: Matt Lippert

With corn at \$6/bushel possibly up to \$8, how can a person ever consider raising alfalfa? Gross returns to corn in the range of 125 to 200 bushel per acre are \$750- \$1,200. Wisconsin 2009 Agricultural Statistics put average state alfalfa yield at 3.4 ton per acre, while haylage is not a widely traded or easily price quoted product at \$50/ ton of 40% DM haylage would yield gross revenue of only \$425/acre. Not enough!

Let's tackle the issues one at a time. UW- Extension has conducted a four year field study with cooperating producers averaging over twenty fields per year; this trial is not a contest, and grower's names are not associated with yield results. This trial has averaged 4-5 ton of dry matter, 10-12.5 ton of 40% DM haylage over the four years of the study (Wisconsin Alfalfa Yield and Persistence Program. Rankin, et al.)

While we may talk a lot about 200 bushel corn, the statewide average yield has more typically been in the 135 bushel range. Alfalfa is a tough crop for the USDA to capture data from. Consider, was it an alfalfa field or a grass mix? Was it harvested as hay, haylage, green chop or grazed, or quite likely a combination of these? What is the average dry matter content of haylage? You can only wish to have that degree of flexibility with corn. Then consider that a much greater portion of the corn crop

enters the channels of trade and gets run across a scale. One can make a good case that state average yields don't do justice to an alfalfa crop managed to the same degree as is typical of corn.

In the field study already sited, the majority of the crop was harvested in a four cutting system and over the four years RFQ season averages have ranged from 151-196. See the two tables below for recent prices of hay in Wisconsin and in California. Supreme Hay is usually considered to be above 185 RFV, so the haylage produced in the Wisconsin study would be in the Premium to Supreme range using Western terminology.

Quality Hay Auction Summary 2010-2011 Beaver Dam, Wisconsin

Grade	RFV	Lots	Tons	\$/ton	CP	ADF	NDF	Matt Hanson
Dodge County UWEX								
Prime	>151	3	20.00	\$151.80	22.6	31.0	38.1	920-386-3790
1	125-151	7	42.74	\$123.91	18.8	34.2	42.9	matt.hanson@uwex.edu
2	103-124	17	103.37	\$113.06	17.1	37.4	48.3	http://dodge.uwex.edu
3	87-102	18	126.35	\$115.66	15.2	41.1	56.6	
4	75-86	7	42.48	\$98.05	11.8	44.0	62.9	
5	<75	2	12.36	\$72.45	8.5	47.9	69.0	

USDA National Hay, Feed & Seed Weekly Summary 6/24/2011

KERN COUNTY, California		
Alfalfa		
	Ton	\$/Ton
Supreme	300	282.50
Premium	1,150	258.91
Good	1,375	240.15
Good	225	250.56
Fair	200	227.00

As you can see, alfalfa hay of comparable quality is averaging \$100-\$130 more in the Central Valley than in Dodge County, Wisconsin. There are characteristics of hay that at similar RFQ it will command a higher price than equivalent haylage. Ignore that difference for one moment if you would please. Applying recent California numbers to prime quality alfalfa haylage would put it at \$120 for 40% DM haylage. Five ton DM, or 12 ton 40% haylage yields at \$120/ton generates a gross of \$1,440/acre! If you allow \$20/ton discount for haylage quality differences relative to dry hay you still are at \$1,200/acre. On a DM basis the haylage-to-hay conversion would be \$50/ton. Five ton per acre alfalfa is too unrealistic? That has been the season average in the UW field trial on real farms over the entire four years of the study, so five tons appears to be a more approachable goal than 200 bushel corn.

Using the FeedVal spreadsheets available on the UWEX- Forage Resources website and inputting \$6 corn and \$340/ton 48% Soybean Meal alfalfa hay prices in at \$190-\$230/ton, or for haylage as discounted above using a midrange price \$88/ton and \$1100/acre. Forage alternatives such as cottonseed, soy hulls and beet pulp price in at \$294, \$215 and \$207. None of these can completely

(Continued on page 5)

replace the function of high quality forage.

Do I see a lot of high quality alfalfa haylage being priced in this way? No. So far in 2011 due to weather challenges there has been a lot of material that doesn't qualify from a quality standpoint, the majority of that never came up for sale staying right on the farm where it was grown. Some of this product may be drastically underpriced because people really aren't aware, but just in case you doubt the math remember that dairy farmers in California are paying well above these prices to make milk that is priced usually at least \$1/cwt. less than here.

There are many other issues of the corn vs. alfalfa debate; perennial vs. annual, four harvests vs. one, but realize this, alfalfa doesn't need to give up anything on the value per acre front to its cash crop competitors.

Rolling Soybeans Featured at JAM Field Day **By: Don Genrich**

Land rolling is the practice of pulling large (about 3 feet in diameter), heavy, cylindrical rollers across your fields, especially soybean fields. This practice started several years ago in Canada, the Dakotas and Northwest Minnesota and is somewhat routine there and is now spreading into other Midwest states including Wisconsin. Usually the practice has been to roll before or after planting, but farmers have been experimenting with different timings as well as multiple passes. The goal is to provide a smooth uniform surface that will ease and speed up harvesting. Other thoughts are that it will improve germination by increasing soil to seed contact, allow for very uniform planting depth and may even increase branching of soybeans if they are rolled in the early vegetative stages.

No research work has been done on this practice in Wisconsin and work done in Iowa and Minnesota in 2009 and 2010 did not show a yield response to rolling. But, producers describe easier harvests with less machinery breakdowns and an overall sense of ease combining soybean fields that have been rolled. A potential concern would be impacts on soil and water quality. Soil compaction, lower water infiltration rates and soil surface sealing may occur with land rolling.

The Juneau-Adams-Marquette Corn and Soybean Growers summer field day features demonstration plots of soybeans that have different rolling treatments. The equipment used to plant and roll the plots will be available for viewing. The field day will be Thursday, July 21st starting at 5:00 p.m. at the Carl Miller Farm, 2814 North Cassidy Road, Lyndon Station. Shawn Conley, UW-Extension Soybean and Wheat Specialist will talk on "Five No-Brainers to Increase Soybean Yield and Profitability". Please call the Adams County Extension Office at 608-339-4237 if you think you will attend. Refreshments and food will be provided by the Juneau-Adams-Marquette Corn-Soybean Growers.

**Visit the Central Wisconsin Agricultural
Specialization Team on the Web— <http://fyi.uwex.edu/cwas/>**

Be Sure to Visit Farm Technology Days July 12 through 14 By: Ken Schroeder



The hosts for the 2011 Wisconsin Farm Technology Days are Ken and Karen Seehafer of Seehafer Acres, Inc., located just north of Marshfield, Wisconsin. Show hours are Tuesday and Wednesday, July 12 and 13 from 9am – 5pm; and Thursday, July 14 from 9am – 4pm. This three-day outdoor event showcases the latest improvements in production agriculture, including many practical applications of recent research findings and technological developments.

Important exhibits to visit while at Farm Technology Days:

Applied Technology Center - This year the center will be featuring everything from options in rural broadband, to improving the efficiency of irrigation systems, to innovations in home gardening.

Conservation Tent – The Conservation Tent will provide information and demonstrations about protection and conservation of our state’s soil, water, plant and animal resources.

Family Living Tent – The mission of the Family Living committee was to center our plans around the theme “Bringing Families Back to Basics.”

Progress Pavilion – Progress Pavilion exhibits support a growing tradition in Wisconsin’s agriculture. Sample a variety of educational exhibits from University of Wisconsin-Extension that include getting your drinking water tested, visiting with UW-Extension Master gardeners, learning about Wisconsin’s fresh market vegetable growers, and scheduling “appointments” with an entire clinic of “doctors” ready to diagnose and suggest treatments for everything from ailing plants to what type of soil you have on your property.

Youth Tent – Whether you live on a farm or are a city dweller, you will find adventure, knowledge, hands-on experiences, and fun through agriculture in the Family Farm Adventure area.

Country Mercantile Tent (arts and crafts) – In addition to vendors who have previously sold their products at WI Farm Technology Days, there will be many local vendors coming to the show for the first time. Shoppers will be pleased with the unique collection of items they will find in the Country Mercantile.

Heritage Equipment Display – The display will include a large selection of tractors and equipment, stationary engines, a display of old trucks and a recently acquired street sweeper in which the original owner was The City of Wausau in 1950.

Ride and Drive Area – The Ride & Drive area offers visitors the opportunity to try out equipment and talk with the manufacturing representatives. Ride & Drive will be open daily from 9:30 am – 3:30 pm.

Field Demonstrations - Field demonstrations will take place in the fields around Tent City both morning and afternoon, weather permitting. Schedule changes will be posted at the Information Booths and on our website, www.marathonfarmtech.com.

For more information on the exhibitors, demonstrations and directions to the show visit the Web site:

www.wifarmtechnologydays.com .



Beef Cattlemen's Cook-out

Hosted by:
Midwest BueLingo Cattle Association
&
North Central WI Cattlemen's Association
along with
Heartland Cooperative, Dorchester, WI
United Cooperative with locations throughout WI
M.H. Eby - Eby Livestock Trailers, Story City, IA

Come join in this opportunity to socialize with beef producers throughout the state and local area along with the exhibitors within the Farm Technology Days Beef Tent

6-9 pm
Tuesday evening, July 12th
at Seubert Inc
Beef Cattle Finishing Facilities
Michael & Julie Seubert & Family
W2084 Co Rd A, Dorchester, WI 54425

Directions from Farm Technology (M243 Hwy 97, Marshfield, 54449) to the feedlot:
due to road construction, take Hwy 97 north to Hwy 29, follow Hwy 29 west to Hwy E, Curtiss; take Hwy E north through Curtiss to Co Rd A, turn east, one mile to the farm.

Stockpiling Forage for Grazing at a Later Time

By: Keith VanderVelde

Stockpiled forage is forage that is allowed to grow and accumulate for use at a later time or during a period of forage deficit. It is common practice to harvest and store (stockpile) forage as hay or silage, but the purposeful stockpiling of forage for grazing at a later time is a new concept for many livestock producers.

The climate of the upper Midwest permits forage to grow during a seven- to eight-month period. Beef cow herd and sheep flock records over the past few years show that winter feed costs are the single largest production expense often making up 60-70 % of the annual cost. Keeping the winter feeding costs low is a key to profitable production. Extending the grazing season by using stockpiled forage in late autumn and during the winter months has been shown to be a very economical way to maintain livestock profitability and reduce labor cost. An extra three to four weeks added to the grazing season is beneficial and with current hay prices it can save \$30 per month in feed costs. Most grass or legume species can be stockpiled. Tall fescue has probably been used most frequently in stockpiling systems because of its good fall growth and persistence under grazing. Although the palatability of tall fescue is relatively low during the grazing season compared to other grasses, it maintains its quality when exposed to adverse autumn and winter weather. Endophyte fungus-free varieties of tall fescue are recommended over those containing endophyte. Smooth brome grass and orchardgrass have slightly higher nutritive value than tall fescue, but may have less persistence in subsequent years following winter grazing. Legumes such as alfalfa and red clover increase the forage nutritive value and contribute nitrogen to associated grasses, but often live for a shorter period of time in mixed stands where winter stockpile grazing is practiced. Red clover has good seedling vigor and can be relatively easy to establish back into pasture stands by frost seeding in late winter or interseeding in the spring.

The most common stockpiling practice is to allow the forage in the stockpile pasture to accumulate during the last 70-80 days of the growing season. This 70-day period can be achieved by halting summer grazing or the last summer hay harvest by July to allow for uninterrupted growth during the stockpiling period. The forage that grows during this autumn period is leafy and high in nutritive value. Nitrogen fertilization in grass pastures is necessary to maximize forage yield during the stockpiling period. Applying 40-50 pounds per acre of nitrogen in early August will often boost the forage yield approximately 50 percent to about 1.5 tons of stockpiled forage dry matter. Fertilization in late September will have minimal effects on stockpiled forage yields. Lack of autumn rainfall will often greatly reduce forage growth and limit efficiency of fertilizer use also.

Strip grazing of stockpiled forages extends forage quality more than continuous grazing. If given unrestricted access to a pasture, livestock will selectively graze plant parts with the highest digestibility and protein concentration first. If unmanaged, animals will have high-quality diets early in the stockpile grazing period, and will be left with forage composed of an increasingly higher proportion of stems and fiber, but of a decreasing nutritive quality. To minimize this effect, producers are encouraged to erect temporary fences and strip graze smaller areas of the stockpiled forage. This grazing management allows the manager to ration the forage, extend the grazing days further into the winter, and provide a more uniform forage nutritive quality.

Stockpiled forage maintains its nutritional value longer in dry years. The physical effect of snow on grazing of stockpiled forages is not as great as might be expected. While snow will restrict access to forage, cows are willing to graze through relatively deep (up to 9 inches) snow for high-quality stockpiled forage. On the other hand, as little as one fourth inch of ice on top of snow or covering the forage may halt grazing.

(Continued on page 9)

August and September are generally considered to be pasture shortage months. It is not often convenient for most producers to set aside a portion of their summer pasture acres for stockpiling. Areas to be stockpiled need to be carefully considered. They may be those used in early summer as hay meadow or early summer pasture areas. The stockpiled pasture areas selected should be easily accessible in the winter for livestock handling and possible supplemental feeding, and have an adequate winter water supply.

On farms where corn crop residues are also available for grazing, weathering losses and nutritional considerations indicate that the corn crop residue fields should be grazed first, followed by the stockpiled forage. During this time of the year, neither corn crop residues nor stockpiled forage may be suitable as a stand-alone ration. A sound supplemental feeding program should be developed to meet the nutritional needs of livestock without excessive winter feeding costs.

Calendar of Events

July

12 and 13, 9 am—5 pm

14, 9 am—4 pm

2011 Wisconsin Farm Technology Days

Ken and Karen Seehafer of Seehafer Acres, Inc., M243 State Hwy 97, Marshfield
Admission \$5, Free Parking

21 JAM Field Day, 5:00 p.m., Carl Miller Farm, 2814 North Cassidy Road, Lyndon Station.
To register, call the Adams County Extension Office at 608-339-4237

26 Hancock Potato Field Day, Hancock Ag Research Station

August

31 Agronomy/Soils Field Day, Arlington Ag Research Station (CCA Credits available)



Committed to the future of rural communities.

NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development
4949 Kirschling Court • Stevens Point, WI 54481
Phone: (715) 345-7659 • Fax: (715) 345-7669 • Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/wi>

USDA Announces Food Drive Focusing on Fresh Produce—Public Encourage to Donate Stevens Point, WI, June 20, 2011 – The USDA has partnered with the Office of Personnel Management for the Feds Feed Families initiative, a summer long food drive. This year we would like to partner with local farmers and focus on fresh local produce to donate to local food banks, pantries, churches, schools and other organizations that work to provide food to those in need.

We will be partnering with The Central WI Resiliency Project and the donations will be delivered to Operation Bootstrap, The Hope Center, St. Vincent de Paul's, The Family Crisis Center and other local food pantries in our area to help provide fresh meals and produce baskets to individuals and families in our local area.

Through The Central WI Resiliency Project's "Fresh For All Seasons Program," there will be an opportunity to provide locally grown, locally preserved foods to area food pantries and meal programs in Portage County by freezing and storing fresh vegetables like corn, beans, broccoli, peas and more. The project aims to increase the nutritional value of foods available to individuals accessing these services while extending the bounty of the area's growing season well into the winter months through preserved foods such as tomato sauce, salsa, jams and jellies.

In an effort to provide fresh produce to the respective organizations, we are encouraging the public's involvement. If your garden or farming operation has an abundance of fresh produce, please contact Jake Bourget at 715-346-1315 or Jessica Mancel at 715-346-1918 to arrange pickup or drop off. Together we can help alleviate hunger in Central Wisconsin!



Your county extension office

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- List of contact information for various county extension offices including Ken Schroeder, Donald Genrich, Matt Lippert, Dairy & Cranberry Production, Farm Business Management, and Dairy & Forage Management.

How to Contact Team Members