

Grading Standards Could Include Pesticide Information, Suggests USDA

Modifying federal grade standards or establishing a certification program to include information about pesticides might help consumers signal their preferences to growers and packers for produce with fewer pesticide residues, according to *Federal Grade Standards for Fresh Produce: Linkages to Pesticide Use*, a report recently published by the USDA.

"Little evidence is available regarding the effects of grades on pesticide use," the report found, adding that research is needed to measure relationships between pesticide use and product appearance, and consumers' tradeoffs between product appearance and freedom from pesticides. Among the policy alternatives listed in the report that "merit consideration" are not changing the standards; lowering the external appearance standards; modifying the standards to include information about pesticide use during growing and packing, and pesticide residues; and adding a pesticide testing and monitoring program separate from both grades and standards and current efforts by the Food and Drug Administration.

Copies of *Federal Grade Standards for Fresh Produce: Linkages to Pesticide Use* (AIB-675) are \$9 from ERS-NASS, 341 Victory Drive, Herndon, VA 22070; or call 1-800-999-6779.

Biological Nematode-Control Techniques May Help Sugar Beet Growers

Sugar beet growers may be able to reduce their dependency on pesticides with biological pest control of nematodes, which is now being studied by researchers funded by the SARE program. Researchers are adapting a system that has been employed successfully in Europe to the growing conditions and climates of the western United States; that system provides sugar beet growers with an environmentally safe means of cyst nematode control. Cooperators in each of the three major sugar beet-growing areas of Wyoming are experimenting with nematode-resistant radishes, used as "trap crops," to reduce nematicide use in sugar beet-barley, sugar beet-bean, and sugar beet-corn rotations. When nematodes enter the tissue of a trap crop, they survive but cannot reproduce.

Additional benefits from this approach to pest control may include protection of soil from wind erosion, capture of soil nitrates, and stabilization of income by integrating livestock into cropping systems. For more information, contact David W. Koch, Project Coordinator, University of Wyoming, Research & Extension Agronomist, Department of Plant, Soil and Insect Science, P.O. Box 3354, University Station, Laramie, WY 82071-3354; (307)766-3242.

Research To Show Benefits Of Well-Managed Forests

Six timber harvesting demonstration/study replicates in Pennsylvania, funded by the SARE program, are helping researchers to examine the economic and environmental benefits of proper farm woodlot management, including improved air and water quality, wood products, recreational opportunities, and wildlife habitat. Each 12-acre replicate consists of six two-acre treatments: a control and five timber harvesting practices. Growth responses will be measured, and stand structure and species composition are expected to be altered.

The research will enhance the adoption of a forest stewardship ethic by farmers, timber harvesters, other landowners, and extension agents by demonstrating the impacts of various silvicultural options. Researchers will also determine the economics of sustainable forestry practices and potential contributions to the whole farm budget. For more information, contact Stephen B. Jones and James C. Finley, Co-Project Coordinators, School of Forestry, Pennsylvania State University, 110 Ferguson Building, University Park, PA 16802; (814)863-0401.

Use of Conservation Tillage on the Increase, Survey Finds

Conservation tillage, either no-till, ridge-till or mulch-till, has been used on approximately an additional 9 million acres a year for the last two years, according to the 1993 national crop residue management survey by the Conservation Technology Information Center. Conservation tillage leaves 30 percent or more of the residues from previous crops on the ground after planting. The survey found

that conservation tillage accounted for more than 97 million acres, or nearly 35 percent of total cropland acres planted in 1993. Almost 39 percent, or nearly 108 million acres, is being clean tilled, leaving little or no residue.

The survey includes a 15-30 percent residue category which is not a form of conservation tillage, but may represent a positive system for soil erosion control.

Combined with other conservation practices like strip cropping, terraces, and rotations, 15-30 percent residue levels can provide adequate erosion control. Adding the 15-30 percent category to conservation tillage acres, more than 170 million acres, or 61 percent of the 278 million planted acres in the United States, utilized some form of crop residue management.