

AG ISSUES UPDATE

Edited by Brad Hollabaugh
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Deadline Approaching for New Crop Insurance Eligibility Requirements

The 2014 Farm Bill added eligibility for crop insurance premium subsidies to the list of benefits subject to federal conservation compliance requirements. This means that to continue receiving the federal subsidy on your insurance you must adhere to these new requirements. The first step is to file an AD-1026 form with your local Farm Services Agency (FSA).

This must be done by June 1, 2015 to be eligible for a federal crop insurance subsidy for the 2016 crop. The June 1 deadline applies regardless of the closing date for the policy. Since the apple policy closing date is not until mid-November, some growers may think they can put this off, but the June 1 deadline is firm.

Those growers who have received other USDA benefits such as disaster payments or conservation program payments (like EQIP) likely already have the form on file. If that's the case, you should make sure it is up-to-date and accurate. According to USDA, the average cost of a crop insurance policy in 2014 was \$8,332 of which more than 60% was subsidized. If you currently have crop insurance and do not have an AD-1026 on file you should have received numerous letters from USDA explaining the new requirements. However, if you are unsure, you should contact your local FSA office to be certain.

As a founding member of the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance, USApple raised concerns with the inclusion of this provision when it was first proposed. USApple is active in a working committee of the SCFBA and has had numerous meetings with USDA officials and staff for the House and Senate Agriculture Committee in an effort to make compliance requirements clear to growers. (*Apple Bites*, 5/5/2015, US Apple)

Senate Finance Committee Passes Trade Legislation

On April 22, the Senate Finance Committee passed the Trade Priorities and Accountability Act, also known as Trade Promotion Authority (TPA). There is strong support for TPA from the business and agriculture sectors including USApple. TPA enables the Administration to negotiate the best possible trade deals and it was under that authority that President Bush negotiated the CAFTA agreement, which has been extremely beneficial to apples.

USApple is active in an agriculture trade coalition working in support of TPA. We have been meeting with Senators who are undecided or leaning no and educating them on the benefits of the legislation for agriculture. A vote by the full Senate is expected before Memorial Day. Labor unions and environmental organizations are putting heavy pressure on Democrats to oppose.

Passage in the House will be a challenge. Pro-business Republicans are supporting but some "left leaning" members are opposed or undecided. Many House Democrats are feeling the pressure of "left leaning" labor and environmental groups that oppose the legislation. However, agriculture can play an important role in offsetting those messages. USApple will continue to play an active role in the coalition and on our own in support of TPA. (*Apple Bites*, 5/5/2015, US Apple)

President Signs 1099 Repeal

President Obama recently signed into law legislation to repeal an oppressive tax filing requirement. H.R. 4 repeals a provision of the health care law that would have required businesses to submit a Form 1099 to the IRS starting next year for every vendor from which they purchased \$600 or more

worth of goods or services. Repeal of Form 1099 was one of the top issues members discussed with Pennsylvania's Congressional delegation during PFB's National Legislative Conference in March.

Voluntary Leafy Green Agreement Proposal Released

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has released its proposal for a voluntary National Leafy Green Marketing Agreement (NLGMA). If adopted, the program would be used to govern the production, handling and packaging of leafy green vegetables, including spinach, lettuce, and cabbage, for handlers who sign on and for all the farmers who supply those participating handlers.

One component of NLGMA is a governing board, which would be tasked with submitting recommendations to USDA Secretary Vilsack and with enforcing the agreement. This proposed board would consist of 26 members, ten of these being producers, including two small farm representatives.

Additionally, the proposed structure includes 12 handlers. The NLGMA proposal is available for review and public comment. Farm Bureau will thoroughly examine the proposed rule and file comments. One area however where there is still some uncertainty is how this voluntary program might be impacted by the Food Safety Modernization Act, passed by Congress in January 2011. The Food and Drug Administration is currently writing regulations for the new law.

USDA Approves Apple Bonus Buy Request

On April 29, 2015, USDA/AMS administrator Anne Alonzo notified USApple that USApple's request for a bonus buy of fresh apples and processed products was approved by Secretary Tom Vilsack. This purchase includes 34.9 million pounds of fresh apples and 16.1 million pounds of processed apple products, and is the largest apple bonus buy in history. The estimated dollar value of the purchase is \$18.3 million.

USDA estimates that the Purchase Announcement soliciting offers to sell will be published within a month. USApple will continue to coordinate closely with AMS Fruit and Vegetable Program staff and keep our members informed of any new developments. (*Apple Bites*, 5/5/2015, US Apple)

Annual Update for National Farmers' Market Directory Begins

The Agriculture Department's Agricultural Marketing Service is opening the updating process for the USDA National Farmers' Market Directory, the official count of the nation's farmers' markets. For the first time this year, the directory will also track farmers' markets with multiple locations and operating days.

"The USDA National Farmers' Market Directory not only counts, lists and maps the country's more than 6,100 farmers' markets, it is also a fantastic resource for those interested in local food production, small producer success and public policy about regional food systems," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. In addition to helping people find the closest farmers' market, the farmers' markets listed in this directory are included in maps, mobile apps and other stats.

All of the information in the directory relies on input from farmers' market managers in the field. Farmers' market managers can update market listings at www.usdadirectoryupdate.com. The complete directory will be released prior to National Farmers' Market Week, Aug. 7-13.

Sen. Schwank Appointed to Ag Committee Post

State Senator Judy Schwank (D-11th Dist.) has been appointed to serve as Minority Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee. She won a special election in March to complete the term of the late Sen. Michael O'Pake.

Her background includes serving as Berks County Cooperative Extension director, Berks County Commissioner and most recently Dean of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at Delaware Valley College. Sen. Elder Vogel (R-47th Dist.) serves as Majority Chair of the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

Fire Blight and Apple Scab Models Available at PA-PIPE

Fire blight and apple scab models for locations throughout Pennsylvania are available at PA-PIPE. It is important to collect site-specific weather data in your orchards, but these models serve as a guide.

The Pennsylvania Pest Information Platform for Extension and Education (PA PIPE; <http://pa-pipe.zedxinc.com/>) was developed as a collaborative effort between Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences faculty, the Pennsylvania State Department of Agriculture, and ZedX, Inc. to provide an early warning system for key pests affecting agriculture and forestry in Pennsylvania.

The models developed utilize weather data, combined with local observations from researchers, local growers, and specialists, which are then processed with algorithm's intended to predict important events in crop, insect, and disease development cycles. The result is a spatial view of the development and significance of diseases, insects, weeds, and crop conditions for the entire Pennsylvania region.

The system is not intended for use when making important economic management decisions, but to help target the timing and need for monitoring of key insects, diseases, and crops in the area.

Apple Scab Model

The Apple Scab Disease model results depict disease severity based on suitability of environmental conditions for disease development. Suitability is determined or forecast based on wetness events and associated temperature. A wetness event is defined as a rainfall event or dew formation. Disease severity is organized into classes: inactive (no infection), active but no infection, and five severity levels: very low, low, moderate, high and very high.

Fire Blight Model

The Fire Blight model results depict disease severity based on suitability of environmental conditions for disease development. Suitability is determined or forecast based on wetness events and associated temperature. A wetness event is defined as a rainfall event or dew formation. Disease severity is organized into three classes. These classes are inactive (no infection), active, but no infection, and active and infectious.

New Blueberry Herbicide and Valuable Weed Identification References

Sandea (halosulfuron-methyl, Gowan) has been approved for use on blueberries in Pennsylvania. Sandea has both preemergent and postemergent activity on certain weeds that can become problematic in blueberry plantings. Labeled rates are really low (1/2 to 1 oz/acre), so make sure that your application rate is correct. Be sure to follow precautions and directions on the label, and avoid contact with any green tissue.

Dangers of Ticks and Lyme Disease Most Significant in Spring

As spring turns Pennsylvania's fields and forests lush and green – and outdoors enthusiasts turn out to go trout fishing, grouse hunting, hiking, mountain biking, camping, canoeing and more -- they will be greeted by sun and fun and at least one dangerous pest: Blacklegged ticks (commonly called "deer" ticks). Carriers of the bacteria that cause Lyme disease, they are a lot more common around the state than they used to be, according to an entomologist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

New PA IMP Blog

The Pennsylvania IPM Program has a new blog at <http://extension.psu.edu/ipm/news>. Posts will include the latest information about pests and their control in both urban and agricultural settings. You may subscribe to receive updates to the blog by clicking on the “Subscribe” link in the left column. You will only receive e-mails when new content is added to the blog. In addition, archived news items and upcoming events can be found in the right column.

PA IPM is also on Facebook under “Pennsylvania IPM Program” and Twitter under “PAIPM”. Both pages are updated frequently with the latest happenings of the program.