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Livestock and Natural Resources

Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

Are you a farmer or rancher whose operation has been directly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic? The Coronavirus Food Assistance Program will provide direct relief to producers who have suffered losses during the 2020 marketing year due to COVID-19.

USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue announced the Coronavirus Food Assistance program on Apr. 17, 2020. CFAP will use funding and authorities provided in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, and other USDA existing authorities. This \$19 billion immediate relief program will provide critical direct support to our farmers and ranchers, maintain the integrity of our food supply chain, and ensure every American continues to have access to the food they need.

CFAP will provide \$16 billion in direct support to agricultural producers impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

Direct support for farmers and ranchers available via CFAP will include:

CFAP will provide direct support based on actual losses for agricultural producers where prices and market supply chains have been impacted.

CFAP will assist producers with additional adjustment and marketing costs resulting from lost demand and short-term oversupply for the 2020 marketing year caused by COVID-19.

USDA evaluated commodity-specific losses occurring during the January to April time frame for immediate assistance. In addition, near-term adjustment costs and supply disruptions over the next few months were also evaluated to the extent possible for sectors where prices have declined significantly for additional assistance.

CFAP is available to farmers regardless of size and market outlet if they suffered an eligible loss. We know that the disruption to markets and demand is significant, and these payments will only cover a portion of the impacts on farmers and ranchers.

USDA will announce more details related to CFAP soon. They do not have many details, but call the Farm Service Agency and schedule your phone appointment to get the ball rolling. I wish I had more news of what might be available to help you.

David G. Hallauer
District Extension Agent
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

The Impact of Soybean Seedling Diseases

Retired K-State Research & Extension Plant Pathologist Dr. Doug Jardine spent much of his career sharing information on soybean disease management. His estimates suggested we could increase soybean yields by over twelve percent if we could eliminate disease pressure. Disease elimination is not possible – but disease management is, and it starts at planting.

Early season seedling blights are estimated to reduce yields an average of two and a half bushels per acre with *Pythium*, *Rhizoctonia*, and *Fusarium*, the primary culprits. Fortunately, seed treatments are effective at dealing with many of these issues, so long as we are using the appropriate active ingredients. What does your seed tag say? Whether you are done planting or just getting started, take a quick look at the active ingredients of your seed treatment and see what they are effective against. Some will likely be fungicides active against the aforementioned diseases. Others may be treatments designed to combat insect pressure. Knowing what you may have some protection against can be a big help when scouting. The Crop Protection Network has some great resources on fungicide efficacy. Drop me a line if you are interested.

The presence of a seed treatment doesn't guarantee elimination of disease. Environment, genetics, and production practices significantly impact seed treatment efficacy. Early season soaking rains or cool/wet conditions following planting can overwhelm seed treatments in conditions that are perfect for diseases to thrive. Many seed treatments are designed to provide protection of seeds/seedlings for approximately three weeks after planting. If environmental conditions conducive to disease occur after that time, the efficacy window may be closed.

For more information on soybean diseases, drop me a line for links to Crop Protection Network publications. Soybean Cyst Nematode – present in nearly twenty percent of our Kansas soybean fields - and other diseases will be discussed in this space at a later time.

Peach Leaf Curl

One of the more common peach tree diseases has shown itself again in 2020. Peach Leaf Curl was noted on a peach tree this week.

A fungal disease, peach leaf curl causes leaves to become puckered and distorted with a reddish-green hue. Severely infected trees tend to drop leaves. If the tree is healthy – this year's leaves are large and deep green with last year's growth being greater than eighteen inches – the tree will likely try to put out new leaves. If not, particularly if last year's growth was less than twelve inches, a fertilizer application would be helpful if one has not yet been applied.

Apply one and a half to two cups of a balanced N-P-K fertilizer under the branch area of the tree. Apply as soon as possible to promote new leaf growth.

Both peach leaf curl and plum pocket can be controlled with a single fungicide application applied this fall after leaf drop or early next spring before bud swell. Use products labeled for peach trees containing the active ingredient chlorothalonil. Be sure to completely cover the tree, including the bark and trunk.

Cindy Williams
Meadowlark Extension District
Food, Nutrition, Health, and Safety

Payment on Student Loans Hits a Pause, but Keep Paying if You Can

Among its many provisions, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act passed by the U.S. Congress in late March hit the pause button for students who owe money for their college education.

It benefits students to continue paying on those loans if they can. With the CARES Act, interest on qualified loans was moved to 0%, so the loan amount will not increase even though the number of payments you owe will remain the same. However, if you are in a position to continue making payments, that is a good idea. Current payments will be fully credited toward the principal, which then lowers the total interest paid over the life of the loan.

The act lowered interest to 0% for direct loans, federal family education loans (FFEL), Federal Perkins loans, and health education assistance loans (HEAL). The 0% rate went into effect on Mar. 13 and will run through Sept. 30.

If you have questions about what type of student loan you have or if this applies to you, contact your loan service.

The CARES act is not a loan forgiveness program; students are still required to pay the balance on whatever they owe. This current program simply delays payments without a penalty. To assure that they are receiving the 0% rate through Sept. 30, students are encouraged to contact their loan service.

According to the U.S. Federal Reserve Board, 60% of individuals currently under age 30 who have recently earned a bachelor's degree acquired debt while doing so. For those who earned graduate degrees, that number rises to 73%. Ninety-three % of those debts are a result of student loans. Statistics from the Federal Reserve indicating that of the first generation college students under age 30, 16% of them are behind on payments. For many, even a brief pause in paying back students loans is welcome relief.

If you are in a position to continue making payments on student loans, that is a good idea. Current payment will be fully credited toward the principal, which then lowers the total interest paid over the life of the loan.

Nancy Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

Time for Tea

People around the world have enjoyed drinking tea for thousands of centuries. Studies have shown that many varieties of tea may boost your immune system, fight off inflammation, and could help protect you from cancer and heart disease. With warm summer days approaching, a glass of iced tea might just be the perfect refresher!

White tea has a high level of antioxidants and the least amount of caffeine. Herbal teas are similar to white and contain a blend of herbs, spices, fruits, or other plants in addition to tea leaves.

Green tea is exceptionally high in flavonoids to boost heart health and is also shown to be anti-inflammatory. Black tea is made from the same plant used to make green tea; however, the leaves are dried and fermented. This gives black tea a darker color and richer flavor, and it is caffeinated.

Oolong tea is similar to green and black tea but processed differently. Oolong is allowed to oxidize more than green tea and not as much as black, creating its characteristic color and taste.

You can enjoy tea hot, cold, iced, or spiced. Tea is enjoyed regularly by people in the Blue Zones® and is sometimes referred to as the longevity drink. To enhance the flavor of tea, add citrus (grapefruit, oranges, lime, or lemon), berries, cinnamon or fresh ginger, honey, mint, and other fresh herbs.

You might avoid detox teas, fancy tea lattes, and trendy bubble teas as they are also loaded with sugar. If you have allergies to herbs or flowers, read the ingredient list on herbal teas.