

2015

# Ag Decision Maker website has a new look!

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Manage crop risk in 2013, continued from page 3

levels. Many of these farms paying high cash rent can't assure themselves positive revenue guarantees in 2013 even if they take high levels of crop insurance and use the TA-Option. That's because the high cash rental rates are so large, the crop insurance revenue guarantee is still less than the overall farm's total costs.

**Expect few crop insurance changes for 2013**

Farmers have some good news for 2013. They can expect very few changes to the federal crop insurance program from 2012. There will be little impact on crop insurance that results from the fate of the 2012 Farm Bill still pending in congress. Crop insurance is still operating under the 2001 Federal Crop Insurance Act and the current program has permanent authorization under the original 1938 legislation.

Congress occasionally makes small reforms to the program. The 2012 Farm Bill proposes combining the traditional commodity program with a separate title to address the crop insurance program as the center-piece for crop risk management.

**2013 rate reductions**

USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) plans to fully implement the rate reductions for corn and soybeans that farmers began to see in 2012. For Iowa corn and soybean farmers, this means a rate reduction averaging 6% lower for corn and 9% lower for soybeans beginning in 2013.

Previously, a yield history dating back to 1975 was used to determine rates. Once the policy changes are in effect, a 20-year yield history will be used.

The new rates are designed to reflect advancements in technology, management and seed.

**Trent-adjusted APH yield endorsement**

Again for the 2013 crop year, farmers purchasing crop insurance for corn and soybeans in major Midwestern states will have the option to use the Trend-Adjusted Actual Production History (TA-APH) Yield Endorsement. This "TA-Yield Option" allows farmers to increase yields used in calculating crop insurance guarantees. Because APH yields lag expected yields, guarantees will also lag.

The TA-Yield Option corrects this issue by allowing a trend adjustment to be added to the APH yield. The resulting TA-APH yield then is used in calculating guarantees. Each county and crop has a TA-APH trend rate estimated using National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS) county yields, with controls included for weather and spatial considerations. These rates are county specific and are published by the RMA for the 2013 crop year.

Any sign-up or changes in coverage for 2013 requires that farmers must sign up for coverage or notify their crop insurance agent by the sales closing date, which is March 15.

**RMA pilot programs**

RMA will continue to offer a pilot program that allows producers to participate based on whole farm and enterprise units. The program will give producers increased coverage at the same price.

RMA also indicated that farmers can expect to see two more changes for 2013, a high-risk land exclusion option and revenue protection for pulse crops.



**Ag Decision Maker website has a new look!**

*by Ann Johanns, extension program specialist, 641-732-5574, aholste@iastate.edu*

**A**g Decision Maker, one of the most visited Iowa State University Extension and Outreach websites, has a new look. The decision-oriented agricultural business website now showcases new and emerging issues within farm management. While the design of the Web page

has changed, the Web address and the Ag Decision Maker purpose, to provide up-to-date information from agricultural economists at Iowa State University and other Midwest universities and institutions, remain the same.

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Ag Decision Maker website has a new look!, continued from page 4

The site is designed for farmers, lenders, farm managers, agriculture instructors and others involved in agriculture. The site offers a wide range of business information on marketing, leasing, land values, legal issues, costs and returns, new business development, and many other topics.

### Website features

The Ag Decision Maker website provides assistance in a variety of ways.

- A six-page business newsletter is provided monthly that contains information and analysis of current business and economic issues.
- More than 430 Information Files provide information and analysis for finding solutions to many of the decisions facing farmers and agribusinesses.
- Many of the Information Files have Decision Tools for on-line computation. Just enter figures into the spreadsheet to analyze individual situations and save the analysis as a file with personal records.
- Teaching Activities are provided for use in the classroom.

- Voiced Media presentations offer further details on some Information Files.

### Information regularly updated

Outlook and profitability files on the website are updated on a monthly basis to show profitability for various crop and livestock enterprises. These files as well as links to the Iowa Farm Outlook newsletter, USDA reports and weather information can be found on the Outlook and Profitability page.

AgDM posts timely tips throughout the month on a blog and through Twitter feed, @ISU\_AgDM.

The Ag Decision Maker website currently has over 3,200 visitors per day. These visitors spend a total of 500 hours on the site every day.

Visit the site at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm> and bookmark it for future reference. Monthly e-mail notification of new information posted to the website is available at no charge. Visit the “e-mail sign-up” link on the homepage for the online form, or e-mail [agdm@iastate.edu](mailto:agdm@iastate.edu).



## Conserve fuel and energy when moving snow

by Dana Petersen, ISU Farm Energy Conservation and Efficiency Initiative, 515-294-5233, [petersen@iastate.edu](mailto:petersen@iastate.edu), and Mark Hanna, extension ag engineer

**E**xpect the unexpected might be the theme for this year’s winter weather, especially if Iowa’s December snow storm is an indication of what lies ahead. Every farm has unique features—windbreaks, site-specific terrain, building placement—and blowing snow may present a challenge. This winter, consider these tips for minimizing farm energy costs and machinery wear and tear when moving snow on the farmstead.

“A common misconception about managing farm energy expenses is that farmers must be willing to spend money to capture savings,” says Mark Hanna, ISU extension ag engineer. “During the winter months, many energy-saving practices can be implemented with little or no out-of-pocket cost for farmers.”

Hanna emphasizes that engine care is critical, especially during the cold weather. “To avoid cold starts, the winter routine typically requires a block heater for your motor,” he says. “Assuming twelve cents per kilowatt hour for a 1000-watt block heater, you can save more than a dollar a day by simply installing a two-hour timer for that heater instead of leaving it plugged in all night.”

In addition to engine care and maintenance, Hanna notes that certain pieces of machinery are better suited to particular types of snow removal.

If your farmstead has space for piles of snow, you may be able to get by with a blade mounted to a ¾-ton truck. Sleet, ice, and slushy, heavy snow

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