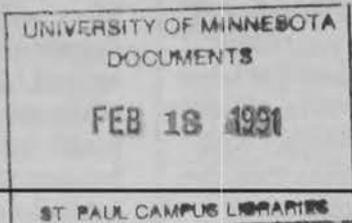


# Agricultural News

Volume 3, Issue 2



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## Farm Bill covers more than farming

The new Farm Bill covers more than farm commodity price and income programs.

Provisions on rural development, conservation, wildlife and resource management—many of them relating to farming practices—make the Farm Bill a complex document. "The legislation covers many things, but there's no funding for many of the programs," says Mike Boehlje, economist with the University of Minnesota's Extension Service.

Boehlje chairs the Farm Bill task force, a 19-member group that's responsible for developing new initiatives and monitoring new funding opportunities for Farm Bill-related programs. The group is also developing recommendations for a two-hour block of in-service agent training in March.

Agriculture program leader Don Olson is the Minnesota contact for new Farm Bill information. He's also a task force member. But the many "non-agriculture" extension people on the task force reflect the Farm Bill's scope. They work in disciplines such as forest resources, natural resources, community economic development, fisheries and wildlife.

Boehlje says the Minnesota Extension Service has a good



Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter discusses the new Farm Bill during a national videoconference in early January. This session was held at the University's Earle Brown Center. (photo by Don Breneman)

working relationship with USDA agencies like ASCS, SCS and FmHA concerning the Farm Bill and other programs. Extension's role is education—to help farmers and other clients analyze the Farm Bill so they can make informed decisions about whether/how to participate, including the risks of non-participation.

"Extension's role is not to

'promote' the Farm Bill program, but rather to inform clients of benefits, costs and risks of not participating," he says.

The Farm Bill provided no new 1991 funding for new programs in rural development and other areas. However, the task force is setting up a mechanism to monitor possible funding for 1992 and beyond.

This archival publication may not reflect current scientific knowledge or recommendations.  
Current information available from University of Minnesota Extension: <http://www.extension.umn.edu>.

# Food safety is everyone's responsibility

## Part 2 of 3

### Labeling

Food labels should help interested consumers. "This means consistent information so that it doesn't take a degree in mathematics to compute it," says Bill Schafer, extension food technologist.

If a food product has been irradiated, this must be stated on the label. This controversial food treatment, approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), is likely to be an issue for the 1991 Minnesota legislature, which has chosen not to ban sale of treated products. (Schafer says to his knowledge, no irradiated products, except spices, are sold in Minnesota). Public concern with irradiation centers on fear of food contamination with radioactive wastes—the thought that food might even "glow" in the refrigerator.

Irradiation is used to control insects, inhibit potato sprouting, control micro-organisms in dried spices and herbs, control the pork parasite causing trichinosis, or prevent salmonella contamination in poultry.

Janice Mannie, Hennepin County extension home economist, made a presentation for extension at FDA public hearings on food labeling this fall. She says major label changes aren't ex-

pected for several years. Keeping labeling simple and direct is the goal. As well as stating weight, she expects new labels will give understandable household measurements, such as the number of cups of food inside a container. The puzzle: how to have the label information relevant to consumers without increasing product cost.

In phone calls to counties, the food questions are apt to center around food that's been left out of the refrigerator several hours. Should it be tossed out or is it safe to eat? "They want us to say it's okay," said Betty Tisher, until recently Ramsey County extension home economist. Her motto is basically "when in doubt, toss it out." But her job is getting the information out to the public and letting them make their own decisions.

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### *Consumers are more aware of what they're eating*

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Consumers have become health conscious and more aware of what they are eating, she said. Extension's Food and Nutrition Extension Program (EFNEP) teaches how to use and store food safely. Among those exposed to this information are new Americans (many of them Asians). Their tradition was growing and eating food on the spot—as needed. In Minnesota, it's planning ahead and preserving food to last during seasons when it can't be grown outdoors.

Extension nutritionist Mary Darling wonders how many people know the meaning of the

*Continued on page 3*

### *New Staff*

On Dec. 6, 1990 **Richard Alderfer** was appointed extension economist, production economics and farm management at the West Central Experiment Station at Morris. Richard received his B.S. degree at Purdue University and earned his M.S. degree at Purdue while employed first as extension youth agent in Tipton County, Indiana and later as extension agriculture agent and CED in Benton County, Indiana. His Ph.D. degree is from Michigan State University.

The new county extension agent, agriculture for Sibley County is **Timothy Dolan**, appointed Nov. 1, 1990. Tim holds a B.S. degree in agricultural education from the University of Minnesota, St. Paul and has been employed as vo-ag instructor in the Hancock Public Schools, Hancock, Minnesota.

Several county extension agents, agriculture have recently moved into new extension assignments. **Douglas Courneya**, formerly acting county extension agent in Carver County, is now acting county extension agent, agriculture in Olmsted County. His appointment is from 10/1/90 to Fall, 1991. **Kendall Langseth**, formerly county extension agent in Wadena County, was appointed county extension agent, agriculture in Freeborn County on Nov. 1, 1990. On Jan. 1, 1991, **Thomas Hovde** was appointed county extension agent, agriculture for Wadena County. Tom was formerly acting county extension agent in Freeborn County. **Kathy Zeman** has taken a temporary assignment as acting county extension agent, agriculture in Chisago County for the period 1/1/91 to 3/23/92. Kathy

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*Agricultural News* is a publication of the Agriculture Program Area, produced by Educational Development System, Minnesota Extension Service. Ideas for stories and letters to the editor are encouraged. Contact Jack Sperbeck, 447 Coffey Hall, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108. Tel. 612-625-1794.

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## New Staff/cont.from p. 2

was formerly county extension agent and CED in Koochiching County.

On Dec. 1, 1990, **John Lamb**, formerly soil scientist at the Northwest Experiment Station at Crookston, was appointed coordinator and soil scientist of the Management System Evaluation Area Northern Cornbelt Sand Plains Project. He will be located in the Department of Soil Science on the St. Paul Campus.

**John Shutske** is the new extension agricultural engineer, agricultural safety and health, in the Department of Agricultural Engineering. He was appointed to this position on Oct. 29, 1990. John received his Ph.D degree from Purdue University and was formerly employed as community education coordinator for Country Companies, the insurance affiliate of the Illinois Farm Bureau.

## Food safety/cont.from p. 2

U.S. RDAs (Recommended Daily Allowances), terminology on packaging, or that ingredients are listed by weight. "If water appears first in the contents, you know it's the heaviest item there," she says.

Words such as lite, reduced fat, fat free, no cholesterol (often attached to products which never contained any to begin with) may be meaningless and tend to confuse consumers. Mixed messages also come from scientists who don't see eye to eye. Remember products containing oats? They were highly touted one year for health value and seemingly discredited the next.

(Next: Part 3 Food Safety—Conclusions)

Mary Kay O'Hearn

## Marketing Programs

### Applying Marketing Concepts to Program Planning

(Fifth in a series on program quality and applying marketing concepts to program planning. The marketing research method information is taken from Chapter 3, "Research Methodologies and Processes" in *Marketing Research in Adult Learning* by C. F. Falk and P. Miller, 1986, Learning Resources Network, Manhattan, Kansas.)

The fifth Falk and Miller marketing research method is "secondary data sources." Secondary data from sources like the U. S. Census, the Census of Agriculture and Minnesota state agencies aren't collected specifically to provide information for program planning. But such information can be very useful.

Something as simple as analyzing zip codes can help identify where program participants live and therefore might indicate the logical location for a demonstration plot, milker barn clinic, home study group, or marketing club.

Falk and Miller's sixth marketing research technique is "focus groups." Many MES faculty are familiar with this technique as a result of Dick Krueger's and Mary Ann Casey's work, as well as others.

Dick's book (*Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, 1988, available in paperback from Sage Publications, Newbury Park, California) is an excellent reference on focus groups. If you are interested in using this technique I'd recommend reading Dick's book and getting in touch with him.

Falk and Miller say that focus groups require organizational effort, but may produce the most valuable information of any marketing research technique. The critical first step is selecting and recruiting participants.

First, list the research questions you want answered, then define the types of persons to provide answers. They might be current program participants, past participants who don't come anymore, or representatives of a new group that you want to reach.

Focus groups work best when members are fairly similar. To develop a program for top dairy producers, you would probably want to invite people whose production per cow is in the top third of the production range and are in DHIA and/or ADA.

You need 8 to 12 individuals for each focus group. You will need to recruit up to twice this many, unless you are reasonably sure you can count on people to participate. Recruitment is usually done over the telephone (by you for the best response) with a written follow-up confirming the details. Also plan to have a member of your office staff call and re-confirm the arrangements the day before.

Professional marketers generally pay focus group participants. We can't do that, but you should offer refreshments and an appropriate publication or other educational materials of interest. You could also explore the possibility of getting some gift items donated by a local agribusiness.

Careful planning is required. Someone without a vested interest in the program and experienced in group process should moderate the discussion. Tape record the discussion. Participants need to know they will be recorded in advance and agree to it. After the session, the taped discussion should be transcribed and analyzed, together with the research questions, notes taken on flip charts, etc.

Analyzing focus group data isn't difficult but requires careful, multiple readings of the information. Look for common themes and ideas.

(Additional marketing research methods will be discussed in the next issue).

  
Marilyn Grantham  
Program Leader, Agriculture



## Agent Profile

**Tim Wagar** is glad he's working in Minnesota and not in Saudi Arabia, where he spent a year in the early 1980s working on a United Nations FAO project.

"I've been through the area where bombs are falling now," he says. Tim has been area crops and soils agent headquartered at Rochester since July, 1984.

Water quality programs have been one of his top priorities. The karst topography of six southeastern Minnesota counties is particularly susceptible to potential groundwater pollution problems. Layers of limestone and sandstone under the topsoil permit rapid transport of nutrients into water aquifers. The problem is compounded by high concentrations of livestock—and manure—in the karst area.



Wagar, along with soil scientist Mike Schmitt and water quality coordinator Fred Bergsrud, received a grant to help farmers manage manure programs through the Sustainable Agriculture Program of Minnesota's Department of Agriculture.

They designed a manure utilization demonstration project in an 11-county area of southeastern Minnesota. "County agents worked with us to select 60 cooperating farmers.

"Experiment Station research has shown that soil nutrients in excess of what the plants use are apt to end up in water aquifers," he says.

We supply free manure test kits for farmers, who collect samples. We provide the analysis.

"We've started developing a data base with nutrient content figures for different animal manures. That's helped the cooperating farmers in their manure management program, and raised awareness among neighboring farmers," he says.

Wagar received two degrees from the University of Minnesota: the first in soil science, then a Master of Agriculture in plant and soil technology. Before he joined extension in 1984, he was a consulting agronomist with Minnesota Valley Testing in Iowa. He's also been an assistant soil scientist at the University of Minnesota.

## Campus Profile



Soil scientist **Mike Schmitt** came to the Minnesota Extension Service from private industry, where he developed training programs

for crop consultants and product dealers in an 11-state area.

"Usually these things work the other way—people move from extension work to the private sector," he says. His stint with a major agribusiness firm was "very similar to extension work."

Mike completed his doctorate at the University of Illinois. His major advisor was an extension specialist in soil fertility and crop production.

"There was an 'extension theme' in my graduate program that I enjoyed," he says.

Although he speaks highly of his experience in agribusiness, "I missed the academic atmosphere of working in collegial relationships with people in various disciplines and the opportunities for applied research," he says.

Mike came to the University of Minnesota in July, 1987, to fill a two-year term as extension agronomist while Dale Hicks completed an overseas assignment in Morocco. Mike moved to an extension soil fertility position in January, 1989.

Manure management is one of his main extension programs, and he cooperates on many applied research and demonstration programs with other campus faculty and

agents (see the agent profile on Tim Wagar above).

He's just developed a new liquid manure applicator for plot research. "We think it's a first class machine with leading edge technology. Calibrations and treatment applications are very precise," he says.

It's a small applicator designed for small plot research and can be easily transported around the state. "But with its seven and one-half foot tool bar, it's comparable to actual field applicators so farmers will relate easily," he adds.

One of his "side interests" is experimental design and statistics. He enjoys playing softball and basketball, but doesn't want his boss to think he spends much time with them.

*Jack Sperbeck*