



News Briefs

◆ Pesticide Use Would Increase with Warmer Weather, Says Global Warming Report

Greenhouse gas emissions are likely to increase average temperatures across the United States by 5 to 10 degrees Fahrenheit by 2100, causing pesticide use to increase for most crops and in most states, according to a draft government report released last month. *Climate Change Impacts on the United States: The Potential Consequences of Climate Variability and Change*, released by the U.S. Global Change Research Program, projects that “increased need for pesticide application on corn was generally in the range of 10-20%, on potatoes 5-15%, and on soybeans and cotton, 2-5%.” In addition, “this assessment did not consider the environmental consequences of increased pesticide use, and it is possible that these would be substantial. In a complete economic analysis, the costs of negative impacts of pesticides on the environment would be considered.”

The key agricultural issues identified and discussed in the draft report are crop yield changes and associated economic consequences, changing water demands for irrigation, surface water quality, pesticide use, and climate variability. “Issues of concern include regulatory actions that might increase costs, such as efforts to control the off-site consequences of soil erosion, agricultural chemicals, and livestock wastes; growing resistance to and restrictions on the use of genetically modified crops; extreme weather or climate events such as droughts and floods; new pests; and the development of pest resistance to existing pest control strategies. Future changes in climate will interact with all of these factors.”

The draft report is available on the Internet at www.gcric.org/NationalAssessment/.

◆ British Supermarket Chain Switches to Organic Vegetables

The British supermarket chain Iceland is switching its entire store brand of frozen vegetables to organic, at no cost to consumers, according to an article in *The London Guardian* (June 15, 2000). “The company claimed to have bought up nearly 40% of the world’s organic vegetable supplies to meet the growing demand from customers,” the article said. “It is paying farmers around the world between 10% and 25% more over three-year contracts, and will cut . . . from its profit margins to avoid charging higher prices. The aggressive marketing move follows the company’s non-GM policy and decision to remove artificial coloring and flavoring from own-brand products.”

Most of the organic produce will come from Europe, the United States, and Central America, according to the story. In announcing the policy, Iceland’s chairman Malcolm Walker said, “Ethically and morally we are happy to be fighting for better food. Commercially it makes sense as well. The market is expected to grow at 40% over the next five years. We are giving the customers a choice of buying natural organic food at affordable prices.”

◆ German Chancellor Asks Agri-Business to Stall on GM Crops Until 2003

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder has called on agri-businesses not to grow genetically modified plants until 2003 so the government can investigate their effect on the environment, according to Reuters (June 21, 2000). He called for a voluntary pause to increase scientific awareness and public acceptance of genetically modified crops. In a paper proposing the three-year delay, Schroeder wrote, “In this time frame, the environmental effect of commercial application and extensive cultivation of GM plants should be determined.” The delay would also “create the basis for the responsible use of the innovation potential of GM plants.”

According to Reuters, “the German proposal follows a scandal [in May] in which farmers in Germany, Britain, Sweden, France and Luxembourg unknowingly grew some GM modified crops after importing seeds from Canada. France ordered its farmers to destroy the crops.”

◆ **GM Crops Are So “Pervasive,” They Are Hard to Avoid, Say Companies**

Many big food producers say that genetically modified crops “are so pervasive that it would be prohibitively expensive, and in some cases, nearly impossible, to eliminate them entirely,” according to an article in *The New York Times* (June 4, 2000). “The industry says that ridding the nation of biotechnology-based ingredients would require a huge and costly reform of the agriculture system.” Despite announcements made by several food companies that they would not use genetically modified products, “none of these companies is actually abandoning biotechnology,” the story said. For example, although Frito-Lay said it would stop using genetically modified corn in its chips, it continues to use corn syrup made from genetically modified crops in its soft drinks, according to the article. Mark Dollins of Quaker Oats points to the fact that “there is no system in the U.S. to segregate GM from non-GM. Any company that says it can segregate, we’d like to know how they do it.”

While “many big food producers are betting heavily on the success and future profitability of genetically modified corn and soybeans,” others are “dropping genetically modified foods from their products, trying to avoid what could be a public relations disaster.” At the same time, the article says, “some food giants are investing in organic or natural food units. Last year, Kellogg bought Worthington Foods, which makes vegetarian dishes. Earlier this year, Kraft Foods bought companies that make nutrition bars and soy burgers, while General Mills, the cereal maker, and Mars, the candy maker, now offer organic foods.”

◆ **New Study Finds GM Corn Doesn’t Hurt Black Swallowtail Butterflies**

A strain of genetically modified corn that produces Bt does not harm black swallowtail butterflies in the wild, according to a study by a research team at the University of Illinois. The study, reported in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, was the first of a series of field studies being conducted to determine whether the crop is a danger to the environment, according to the Associated Press (June 6, 2000). Bt corn, which produces an insecticide that is toxic to the European corn borer, had killed the larvae of monarch butterflies that ingested its pollen, according to a laboratory study at Cornell University last year.

The swallowtail is considered to be less sensitive to the corn toxin than the monarch, but the swallowtail is much more likely to be exposed to the pollen, according to the AP. Farmers were expected to plant about 14 million acres of Bt corn this year, 18 percent of the total corn acreage.

◆ **Oregon Company Turns Fish Waste into Organic Fertilizer**

An Oregon company is converting fish waste into organic fertilizer which is used on farm fields in the Willamette Valley, as well as home gardens and commercial nurseries, according to *The Portland Oregonian* (June 9, 2000). In addition, Oregon’s wine producers are turning to fish-based fertilizer to increase productivity and safeguard the environment, the story said. The company, Bio-Oregon, processes about 75 million pounds of seafood waste from fish processors in Oregon and southwest Washington each year. About 60 million pounds end up in salmon feed used by fish hatcheries; the rest goes into the company’s line of fertilizers. To receive the organic label in Oregon, fish fertilizers must meet standards set by Oregon Tilth.

According to Bruce Buckmaster, co-owner of Bio-Oregon, “We are seeing the need grow. The majority of the growth has been on organic agriculture. Organic fertilizers are fully utilized by the plant over a period of 80 to 100 days, so people don’t have to fertilize as often, and they don’t have to get a more costly product.” Bio-Oregon’s customers like the fish fertilizer products, according to the article. “They are ever-increasing in popularity,” said a purchasing manager at Portland Nursery. “We see the sales growing every year. People are happy with the results.”

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Wallace Center/Winrock News

◆ **Wallace Center Has New Address, Phone Number with Move to Winrock's Virginia Office**

Effective July 10, 2000, the Wallace Center will be located in the Virginia office of Winrock International in Arlington. The new address is the Henry A. Wallace Center for Agricultural & Environmental Policy, Winrock International, 1621 N. Kent St., Ste. 1200, Arlington, VA 22209-2134; phone (703) 525-9430; fax (703) 525-1744. The staff's e-mail addresses will remain the same.

◆ **Historic USDA Research Center Named for Henry A. Wallace**

A major historic USDA research center in Maryland was named last month for Henry A. Wallace, former U.S. Vice President and Secretary of Agriculture. The Henry A. Wallace Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, part of the Agricultural Research Service, is a 6,500-acre scientific facility that is one of the largest agricultural research centers in the world. Speaking at the ceremony were U.S. Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland; former Senator Dale Bumpers of Arkansas; former Senator John Culver of Iowa; USDA Secretary Dan Glickman; and Jean Wallace Douglas, Henry A. Wallace's daughter, Honorary President of the former Henry A. Wallace Institute for Alternative Agriculture, and long-time supporter of the Wallace Institute's work.

"Henry A. Wallace changed the face of American agriculture during his career as a scientist and as Secretary of Agriculture," Secretary Glickman said. "Wallace was committed to the idea that science is our best hope for sustaining agriculture and preserving the environment."

The USDA described Wallace as "a corn geneticist, an agricultural economist, and a vigorous advocate of soil conservation and ecology. Considered by many one of the country's greatest Secretaries of Agriculture, Wallace framed the Agricultural Adjustment Act, which stabilized farm prices and promoted soil conservation, helping America's farmers survive the Great Depression. Wallace believed scientific research was the best way to advance agriculture and maintain the quality of soil and the environment as a whole."

Positions

The University of Saskatchewan seeks a Research Chair for Sustainable Agriculture; inquiries should be directed to Prof. Richard Gray, Director, Centre for Studies in Agriculture Law and the Environment, 51 Campus Dr., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada S7N 5A8; (306) 966-4026; e-mail grayr@duke.usask.ca.

Lincoln County Cooperative Extension/Washington State University Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources seek a Dryland Farming Systems Specialist; contact Dr. Edward B. Adams, Agriculture and Natural Resources Program Leader, 668 N. Riverpoint Blvd., Box B, Spokane, WA 99202-1662; (509) 358-7960; e-mail adamse@wsu.edu; on the Internet, www.wsu.edu:8080/~chr/2396.html.

Three Springs Gardens CSA seeks a gardener/member; contact Three Springs Gardens, c/o Michelle Vesser, 59820 Italian Bar Rd., North Fork, CA 93643; (559) 877-4845.

Resources

"**Soil Management Series**" has five titles: Soil Management, Compaction, Manure Management, Organic Matter, and Soil Biology and Soil Management, at \$3 each, \$13 for full set, plus shipping; "**Collaborative Marketing: A Roadmap and Resource Guide for Farmers**" is \$4.75 plus shipping; order all from University of Minnesota Extension Service Distribution Center, 405 Coffey Hall, 1420 Eckles Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108; (800) 876-8636.

"**LocalHarvest.com**" is a Web site for farmers to connect with consumers about farmers' markets and small farms in the United States; the site is www.LocalHarvest.com; or contact Erin Barnett, Ocean Group, (831) 466-0700; e-mail erinb@oceangroup.com.

"**Grape Expectations: A Food System Perspective on Redeveloping the Iowa Grape Industry**" is available from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, 209 Curtiss Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011-1050; (515) 294-3711; or on the Internet at www.leopold.edu/grapes2000.html.

"**Who Will Pay for Environmental Improvements in the 21st Century?**" is available from Alternative Farming Systems Information Center, National Agricultural Library, 10301 Baltimore Blvd., Beltsville, MD 20705; (301) 504-6422; on the Internet, www.nal.usda.gov/wqic/ResourceGuide.html.

Upcoming Events

August 10-11, Second Annual National Symposium on the Future of American Agriculture, sponsored by the University of Georgia, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, will be held in Athens, GA; contact Georgia Center for Continuing Education, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602-3603; (800) 884-1381 or (706) 542-2134; on the Internet, www.gactr.uga.edu/conferences/index.html.

October 9-11, three separate conferences with crossover privileges will be held in Des Moines, IA: First International Swine Housing Conference and Exhibition, Second International Conference and Exhibition on Air Pollution from Agricultural Operations, and Eighth International Symposium and Exhibition on Animal, Agricultural and Food Processing Waste; contact American Association of Agricultural Engineers/Society for Engineering Professionals in Agricultural, Food and Biological Systems, 2950 Niles Rd., St. Joseph, MI 49085; (616) 429-0300.

October 19-20, "Understanding the Challenges and Opportunities for Eco-labels and Eco-brands" will be held in Portland, OR; contact Theresa Steig, The Food Alliance, (206) 524-5302; on the Internet, www.thefoodalliance.org.

October 29-November 2, "Partnerships Among Land Grants and Nonprofits" will be held in Glynwood Center, NY; contact Hal Hamilton, Taproot, Learning Communities Project, P.O. Box 342, Hartland, VT 05048; (802) 436-2333; e-mail hhamilton@centerss.org; or Vicki Van Zee, (413) 587-9302; e-mail vanzee@javanet.com; on the Internet, www.centerss.org.

November 9-10, "Land, People and Profits: Integrating Agriculture, Communities and Economic Development," sponsored by the Northeast Training and Support Network for Agricultural Development, will be held in Albany, NY; contact Kathy Ruhf, Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, (413) 323-4531; e-mail nesawg@smallfarm.org; or Roger Clapp, e-mail rclapp@together.net.

November 27-29, 16th Symposium of the International Farming Systems Association and 4th Latin American Farming Systems Research and Extension Symposium will be held in Santiago, Chile; contact IFSA/IESA, Casilla 228 Correo 22, Santiago, Chile; e-mail IFSA@rimisp2.cl; on the Internet, www.rimisp.cl/ifsa_iesa2000.html.

November 30-December 1, "The Future of Our Food and Farms," a regional summit for Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, and Delaware, will be held in Philadelphia, PA; contact Meredith Stone, Farmers' Market Trust, 1201 Chestnut St., 4th Fl., Philadelphia, PA 19107; (215) 568-0830; e-mail fmtrust@libertynet.org.

December 5-8, First National Conference on Grazing Lands will be held in Las Vegas, NV; contact John Peterson, NCGL Program Manager, 9304 Lundy Ct., Burke, VA 22015-3431; (703) 455-4387/6886; e-mail jwpeterson@erols.com; or Monti Golla, NCGL Administrative Assistant, 101 S. Main St., Temple, TX 76501; (254) 742-9947; e-mail Monti.Golla@tx.usda.gov.



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