Summary of the New Farm Bill

The passage of the 2014 Farm bill brings about significations changes in agricultural policies. The new features include a greater emphasis on insurance products and enrollment choices based on changes in farm revenue.

The farm bill is for five years, 2014-2018. The sign up period is unknown at this time. Comments by the Secretary of Agriculture at the Commodity Classic in February indicated the sign up may not begin until late summer or early fall and the signup may extend into 2015. The reason for the delay is the complexity of the program and the time needed to write the computer software for enrollment.
At my web site I have a list of web links and pdfs on the 2014 Farm Bill. It will updated as more information becomes available. This will include spreadsheet decision tools and web based programs. I will also include information meetings in the region.

http://extension.missouri.edu/scott/Farm-bill.aspx

The following summarizes the key changes that were made, the new programs that are being made available to landowners and producers, and the decisions that these individuals or firms will need to make.

The new farm bill eliminates Direct Payments, the Counter-Cyclical program (CCP), the Average Crop Revenue Election program (ACRE), and the supplemental revenue assistance program. Marketing loans are retained and unchanged.

Corn, soybeans, grain sorghum, and rice farmers will have the choice to enroll in either the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) or Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC). Producers will have a one-time opportunity to elect PLC or ARC on a farm by farm, and crop by crop basis. If choosing ARC, producers must then also choose between County Coverage or Individual farm Coverage. If the PLC option is chosen, farmers will also have the opportunity to enroll in the new insurance policy Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO).

Farmers and landowners will have the opportunity to reallocate the current base acre allotment. This attempts to bring current base allotment more in-line with recent plantings. The reallocation of covered commodities will be in proportion to the 4-year average of the planted acres (actual planted and prevented plantings) from 2009 to 2012 crop years. Also, yields can be updated to reflect 90% of the 5-year average from 2008 to 2012.

Cotton will have a new “safety net” program called STAX (Stacked Income Protection Plan) beginning with the 2015 crop year. Current cotton base can be converted to “generic” base. In any year that generic base is planted to a covered commodity, that base will fall in-line with the program choice for that commodity. For example, if soybeans are allocated to generic base in 2015 then the generic base will be follow the soybean program chosen (ARC or PLC). Then if corn were planted to the generic base in 2016, the generic base would follow the corn program chosen (ARC or PLC).

Because STAX will not be available until 2015, cotton will receive a “transition assistance” payment for 2014. This equates to 5.4 cents/pound on all 2013 base acres and direct payment yields. The Marketing Loan program including LDP’s and MLG’s continues to operate as it has under the 2008 farm bill. The Loan Rate on cotton is changed, however. The Loan Rate will be the average Adjusted World Price (AWP) for the previous 2 crop years but not more than 52 cents/lb and not less than 45 cents/lb.
Evaluating Wheat Stands

Wheat development in late planted fields has been minimal due to cold weather and many fields may have limited number of tillered wheat plants. Tiller development (Feekes 2 -3) starts in the fall of the year and can go through early spring. Spring tillers that contribute to yield are limited to a short period of growth right after wheat breaks winter dormancy. At Feekes 3 stage of growth tillering ends. Wheat moves into green-up (Feekes 4-5) phase where energy is going to developing heads. Tillers formed after this period of time may not contribute to yield. Feekes 5 is when final nitrogen decisions need to be made since Feekes 6 is jointing and the beginning of wheat’s greatest demand for nitrogen.

A good guide for following wheat development is Purdue University’s guide: “Managing Wheat by Growth Stage” at https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/ID/ID-422.pdf.

Any evaluation of stand is an estimate of potential yield and not all tillers may produce a viable head. With this in mind, one way to estimate yield is to count plants with at least 2 unfurled leaves in a foot of row. Take the formula: (count * 12)/row spacing in inches = plants per square foot. On average, each stem per square foot has the potential to produce a bushel per acre. There are always others factors as the season progresses that influences this potential. There are numerous ways to estimate a wheat stand, just keep in mind they are only estimates.


Spring Burndown: Targeting Marestail

Weed control of winter annuals should be on the mind of producers as we move into March. The minimum temperature range for control of winter annuals including marestail (horseweed) and annual ryegrass is 50°F. Herbicide rate can compensate some at lower temps but 40°F should be the lower cutoff. Application timing for maximum potential control is when marestail is in the rosette stage of growth. Allow enough time between burndown and planting to insure crop safety and to evaluate control. Avoid planting into emerged marestail, especially with soybeans since in season control is very limited.

Targeting marestail this spring the products that provide good POST control are programs containing growth regulating herbicides, dicamba, or 2,4-D or a package mix of the two as the base plus glyphosate. Another product that can be can provide marestail control is sulflufenacil (Sharpen/Verdict). Other contact burndown tankmix choices include paraquat (Gramoxone) and glufosinate (if you are NOT planting Liberty Link soybeans). Residual herbicides containing ALS mode of
action (Group 2) can provide residual control of ALS-sensitive populations. Herbicides containing residual activity including growth regulating herbicides have plant back restrictions that must be followed or crop injury will occur. Read and follow all label instructions.

Two links that I recommend you read for specific management of marestail are Take Action publication “Management of Herbicide Resistant Horseweed (Marestail) in soybeans” (also attached as PDF) and Arkansas-crops article “Winter annual burndown..Will the weather cooperate?” Both can be found at their respective links: [http://weedscience.missouri.edu/extension/extension.cfm](http://weedscience.missouri.edu/extension/extension.cfm) and [http://www.arkansas-crops.com/2014/02/07/burndown-weather-cooperate/](http://www.arkansas-crops.com/2014/02/07/burndown-weather-cooperate/).

**Soilborne Viruses**

As wheat continues to develop this year continue to scout for wheat spindle streak mosaic and wheat soilborne mosaic virus which are vectored by a soil fungus. Other viruses that occur in wheat and can occur in the same field are barley yellow dwarf which is vectored by aphids and wheat streak mosaic which is vectored by the wheat curl mite. Fungicides do not control viruses in plants. Typically, symptoms become pronounced as wheat begins greening up. Symptoms include yellow to light green mosaic patterns with no distinct edges. Fungal disease typically causes lesions with distinct edges which eventually merge or raised pustules as you would find with stripe rust or leaf rust.

Virus symptoms may persist as long as cool conditions continue and as air temperatures increase symptoms tend to fade. Management for soilborne viruses include crop rotation, variety selection, and maintaining soil fertility levels. Again, fungicides do not control viruses in plants. For more information and photos of virus symptoms refer to IPM guide 1022: “Management of Soft Red Winter Wheat” at the following link: [http://extension.missouri.edu/publications/DisplayPub.aspx?P=IPM1022](http://extension.missouri.edu/publications/DisplayPub.aspx?P=IPM1022).