

## Crop Protection Clinic Scheduled for Jan. 7



Participants of previous Crop Protection Clinics estimate the value of the program is \$5.37 per acre.

Lancaster County is slated to serve as a host site for a Crop Protection Clinic again in 2004. This very popular clinic offers many topics of interest to crop producers and agribusiness professionals alike. As usual, the latest developments in weed, insect and disease management topics will be covered. Specific topics this year include: Managing Roundup Ready Corn, Soybean Aphids, Seedborne Diseases, Effect on Yield from Timing of Weed Removal, Enhancing Herbicide Performance, Rootworm Transgenics, Soybean Disease Update, What's new in Herbicides, Factors Affecting Glyphosate Performance, Resistance Management, Rust Diseases and a wrap-up session for commercial applicator certification in the Ag Plant category.

An evaluation survey following last year's clinic tell the value to Nebraska farms. We had 152 people attend the clinic in Lincoln in 2003 split roughly 50/50 between producers, and agribusiness or agency personnel. About half of the participants (77/150), responsible for growing, managing or scouting crops on 607,228 acres, completed and returned an evaluation survey. About one-fifth of the participants (31/150) estimated the value of the program in terms of dollar per acre increased profit. The average reported estimated value of the program to these 31 participants was \$5.37 per acre on 297,935 acres. This represents a direct benefit of \$1.6 million to these 31 participants.

Commercial Pesticide Applicators will be able to renew their General Standards and Ag Plant certification by attending the entire workshop session. Registration begins at 8 a.m. with sessions continuing from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The \$25 registration fee includes proceedings, publications, refreshments and the noon meal. (TD)

## Sorghum Seminars Scheduled

The University of Nebraska, in cooperation with the Nebraska Grain Sorghum Producers Association, will be conducting a series of sorghum seminars across Nebraska in January. Topics include a marketing outlook, long-range weather forecast, nitrogen application based on soil analysis, feed/forage value of sorghum, successful sorghum production, making the most of available moisture, understanding the farm bill and governmental alphabet soup. Registration is \$5 at the door but NeGSPA members get in free. (TD)



Dates and locations:

- Monday, Jan. 12 — McCook - Fairgrounds
- Tuesday, Jan. 13 — Hardy - Auditorium
- Wednesday, Jan. 14 — Kearney - Fairgrounds
- Thursday, Jan. 15 — Milligan - Auditorium

# Off-Farm Income Important to Farm Families

Tom Dorn  
Extension Educator

The primary clientele I serve in my job as extension educator based in Lancaster County are the commercial agricultural producers, small farm operators and acreage owners. My interest was understandably piqued when I ran across the following policy brief by Roy Frederick, public policy specialist, Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Nebraska. I think it tells much about the economic realities of farming today.

Dr. Frederick said, "To me it's a stunning number. The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently estimated that 94 percent of the income for farm-operator households will come from off-farm sources this year. In average dollar terms, that's off-farm income of \$63,635 out of total household income of \$67,603. Stated differently, the average farm family is forecast to receive only \$3,968 from its farming operations in 2003. And this comes in a year when farm incomes are expected to be about 50 percent higher than last year!

Averages, of course, mask wide variations among individual

farm-operator households. Differences fundamentally occur because of the size of the farm business and work/investment choices.

USDA broadly categorizes farms three ways: rural residential, intermediate and commercial.

Operators of rural residential farms spend most of their work time off the farm. In fact, 80 percent of those in this group work full time at an off-farm job. Others are retired and receive most of their income from passive sources, including Social Security. But they're all still classified as farmers because they sell at least \$1,000 worth of agricultural products annually.

More often than not, those in the rural residential group have net losses from farming. But they stay with it, mostly because they enjoy the rural lifestyle and earnings from other sources make it possible. Perhaps surprisingly, average income for these households is a few thousand dollars higher than the overall farm-operator average.

The chief characteristic of the intermediate group is that, unlike rural residential farms, operators work mostly on the

farm. However, the operator's spouse often works off the farm. Operators of these farms typically aspire to reach the status of full-size commercial farms. Total annual income for the intermediate households averages about \$40,000. This is lower than both the rural residential group and commercial farms.

Commercial-farm households differ from rural residences and intermediate-size farms both in the amount of income and its sources. Net farm income for commercial-farm operators is expected to be in the \$75,000 range for 2003. Overall household income should approach \$110,000. Obviously, farm income dominates for these households, even though off-farm income is not insignificant.

Two important implications come from understanding differences among farms. First, off-farm employment at an attractive salary may be what rural residential farms need more than anything else. Second, many intermediate farms want to increase overall profitability to the level of commercial farms. But what the public role should be, if any, in helping them reach that objective remains elusive."

## Private Pesticide Applicator Training

Who needs a private pesticide applicator certificate and license? Applicators who use or supervise the use of RESTRICTED USE pesticides to produce an agricultural commodity on property he or she owns or rents, or on an employer's property, needs a private pesticide applicator certification and license. A private applicator may also apply restricted-use pesticides on the property of another person, provided there is no compensation (other than trading personal services).

### Training Dates

Training dates for private pesticide applicator certification training in Lancaster County.

- Monday, Jan. 26, 8:30–11:30 a.m.; repeated 1:30–4:30 p.m.
- Saturday, Jan. 31, 8:30–11:30 a.m.
- Tuesday, Feb. 3, 6:30–9:30 p.m.

Beginning in 2004, the Cooperative Extension program fee has increased to \$15 for Private Pesticide Applicator Training. This fee will be collected at the training session. Make checks payable to Lancaster County Extension. Participants attending will receive a copy of the "Private Applicator Certification Study Guide," the "2004 Guide for Weed Management in Nebraska" (which normally sells for \$3) and a field record book. Participants don't need to pre-register. Registration will be conducted at



the door. If you are re-certifying, remember to bring the notification letter and registration form you received from the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA). This will simplify the application process.

### Home Study Option

Another option for private applicators is to take the home study course instead of attending a training session. Persons desiring to become certified in this manner need to come to the extension office, pick up the study manual and fill out the application form. They should then read the material, complete the test questions and return the book to the extension office where the tests will be graded. The extension office will then forward the application to the NDA. The Cooperative Extension program fee for the Home Study Course is \$20, payable when the book is picked up. The home study method of receiving

certification can be done at any time throughout the year, and there is no time limit for when the book must be returned. Most people can complete the home study course in three to four hours. Allow approximately three weeks for the application to be processed and the certification to be mailed to the applicant.

### License Fee

The Nebraska Legislature passed LB329 in May 2001 which created a new state pesticide applicator license fee of \$25 for private applicators. The pesticide license fee is a replacement for the now defunct fertilizer tax. Upon the completion of your private pesticide applicator training at the Lancaster County Extension office, we will forward your application to the NDA. When the NDA receives your application form, you will be mailed an invoice for the state license fee. The license fee covers the three-year certification period. Note: We cannot collect the license fee at the training session.

Upon receipt of the license fee payment, the NDA will issue your pesticide license card to you. All dollars collected by the NDA in license fees are transferred for use by Nebraska Natural Resource Districts in their educational programs. You must have your combination private pesticide certification and pesticide license card in order to purchase and use restricted-use pesticides.