

# Harvest gets underway



## 2009 Silage Trials will bring some new twists

Prior year photo of trial plot harvesting courtesy of Penn State

By SHERRY BUNTING  
Special for Farmshine

STATE COLLEGE, Pa.—High yields and good quality are expected from this year's corn silage harvest, predicts Penn State University Agronomy Professor Greg Roth.

"While we're finding the maturity is a little bit delayed this year, overall, most farmers will be satisfied with the yields they get," he says. "We expect the crop to have good grain content."

Likewise, the 2009 PDMP Corn Silage Hybrid Research Project is expected to yield a bumper crop of valuable data. That is, Roth sees this year's growing conditions as setting the stage for collecting meaningful information. The harvest of project plots began in Franklin County, where reports indicate good yields this year.

"When farmers get ready to evaluate hybrids for next year's production, they should have good information from this trial to compare with the other information they get from seed companies," Roth explains. "With the lack of crop stress at the various silage plot locations this year, we hope to get some better conditions for more valuable comparisons compared with the past couple years."

In its eighth year, the silage project is led by PDMP's research and development committee, with Bradford County dairyman Gary Kline serving as the project leader this year. Partnering with PDMP in this project are Penn State University's crop and soils science department,

under Roth's leadership, as well as FORAGEdata, the developer of the system that turns the raw data into meaningful information.

This year, 18 seed brands and 124 hybrids were entered into the PDMP silage project. "This project gives farmers a good chance to look at some genetics they haven't seen before," Roth says, explaining what is special about this trial is that, "Our evaluations come out of actual conditions farmers grow their crop in Pennsylvania where no-till practices are often used and manure is applied. The conditions are representative of the kind of conditions these hybrids would be exposed to in the real world."

Ten cooperating dairy farms in six counties provided plots for the silage project this year: Dave Hileman, Hilecrest Farm and Bill England, Weeping Hollow Farms, Blair County; Clint Burkholder, Burk-Lea Farms, Franklin County; Logan Bower, Pleasant View Farms, Perry County; Gary Kline, Y-Run Farms and Jeff Morse, Bradford County; Dan Ulmer, Guided-Path Farms and Scott Harkcom, Centre County; and the Risser family's Meadow Vista Farms and Dave Johnson, Lancaster County.

In addition to good conditions for comparing hybrid data, Roth said dairy producers can look forward to some new features in the silage research project this year.

For example, farmers are more concerned about the susceptibility levels of different corn plant hybrids to diseases, which might need fungicide application. So the trial tries to look

at the differences among the hybrids on this.

"We are seeing a bit more of the leaf diseases at some locations this year, so we can take some ratings to characterize that," he said. "This is something new you'll see in the silage project data this year."

This year's hybrids will also be evaluated using different techniques for measuring digestibility, with a special trial included for recording this data.

"We are also evaluating brown mid-rib (BMR) hybrids this year at some of our locations," Roth notes. "We should have some interesting information on yield and quality to report in November on the BMR hybrids. We're especially interested to compare conventional and leafy hybrids this year."

The 2009 silage trial data will include a small test within the larger project, which looks at that difference from a yield and forage quality standpoint. "We set this up in conjunction with advice given by nutritionists and PDMP on this topic," he explains.

As for the overall silage harvest, Roth observes that, "Our northern tier locations in Bradford County this year are reporting a crop that promises exceptionally good yields this year," he says. "Both plots up there look very good, and we hope to get some good performance information from those trials."

He suggests that in northern areas, where frost might be a risk, producers may want to carefully evaluate the maturity of their fields right now and reserve those that are farthest along for grain harvest.

"That way, if we get frost in September up there, you can still chop the later fields and have the early ones for grain," Roth suggests.

Roth urges farmers to be monitoring the moisture levels in the crop. "The dry conditions we had during the first week of September moved the crop along," he explains. "The silage harvest is starting full swing in many areas, and since the crop is a little behind in maturity and farmers have planted some corn late, now is the time to be monitoring our moistures in the corn crop and making silage harvesting plans to maximize your yields for this year's crop."

The results of the 2009 PDMP Corn Silage Hybrid Research trials will be discussed during the November 5 Dairy Industry Issues Forum in Plainfield, Cumberland County, PA and in more detail at the Penn State Dairy Nutrition Conference November 11-12.

The silage trial results are also released on a web-based system, which enables producers to select their sort criteria and to compare different hybrids on an equal scale. In keeping with its mission of seeking to advance the dairy industry in Pennsylvania through improved productivity and profitability, the Professional Dairy Managers of PA (PDMP) last year opened up the access to this information to all dairy producers.

For more information about the PDMP Corn Silage Project and the Nov. Dairy Industry Issue Forum on the topic of 'Dairy's place in the world market,' contact PDMP at 877.326.5993 or visit the website at www.pdmp.org.

## Sept. 28 is deadline for nominations to USDA Dairy Advisory Committee

By SHERRY BUNTING  
Special for Farmshine

WASHINGTON, D.C.—As dairy producers have been meeting throughout the Northeast and across the country in regard to milk pricing reform, the deadline is fast approaching for nominating people to serve on U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack's Dairy Industry Advisory Committee.

On August 25, USDA announced that as part of its continuing efforts to listen to and respond to the needs of producers in the dairy industry, Sec. Vilsack seeks nominations for this Committee from which he will appoint up to 15 people to serve two-year terms.

According to the *Federal Register* notice, the purpose of this Committee is to review the issues of: (1) Farm milk price volatility and (2) Dairy farmer profitability and provide sugges-

tions and ideas to the Secretary on how USDA can best address these issues.

To be considered for an appointment to this Advisory Committee, written nominations must be received by USDA on or before September 28, 2009. A prior news release from USDA contained an address that differs from what is published in the *Federal Register* and what was listed in letters sent to interested parties. The Aug. 24 *Federal Register* notice states that the nominations for this Dairy Industry Advisory Committee should be mailed to:

**Brandon Willis, Deputy Administrator  
Farm Service Agency, Farm Programs  
USDA Room 3612-S, Stop 0510,  
Washington, D.C. 20250-0510**

Nominations may also be faxed to the attention of Brandon Willis at: (202) 720-4726; or e-mailed to: [brandon.willis@usda.gov](mailto:brandon.willis@usda.gov).

The letter of nomination should include:

1) A description and documentation of the proposed member's qualifications for membership to this Advisory Committee.

2) The nominee's name, title, address, telephone number, and fax number.

According to information posted at USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service website ([www.ams.usda.gov](http://www.ams.usda.gov)), Sec. Vilsack seeks "a diverse group of members representing a broad spectrum of persons interested in providing suggestions and ideas on how USDA can tailor its programs to meet the dairy industry's needs."

After receiving the nominations, USDA will send the necessary forms to the nominees in which they must provide their biographical information, complete the provided "clearance forms" and return these forms to USDA within 10 working days of when they are received. The department seeks to expedite this clearance process before Sec. Vilsack appoints the

Committee members.

According to a letter sent by USDA to "interested parties," Sec. Vilsack will appoint up to 15 representatives to this Committee. Eligible nominees include: producers and producer organizations, processors and processor organizations, consumers, academia, retailers, and state agencies. Nominees should represent organic and non-organic dairy interests at the local, regional, national and international levels.

Once established, the members of this Advisory Committee will elect a chairperson and vice chairperson.

"It is critical that nominees be able to provide USDA direction and insight into the future of the dairy industry," the letter states.

For questions about the nominating process, contact: Solomon Whitfield, Designated Federal Official by phone at (202) 720-7901 or by email at: [solomon.whitfield@usda.gov](mailto:solomon.whitfield@usda.gov).