

Nutrition Management Plans

by Richard Halopka , UW-Extension Crops and Soils Agent in Clark County

Nutrient Management Class Schedule As of January 2008, all Wisconsin agriculture producers applying nutrients to cropland are required to implement a nutrient management plan (NMP) in accordance with ATCP 50 of the Wisconsin Administrative code. Cropland owners who receive farmland preservation payments, have engineered manure storage or have had an ordinance violation must provide an NMP for their cropland. An NMP can be developed by a certified crop advisor (CCA) or by a qualified farmer after completing a DATCP-approved training course. The benefit of taking NMP training is that the farmer will improve his/her crop management skills, and he/she will understand how to implement an NMP. The training is 6 hours for a refresher course or 12 hours if qualified for the first time. The cost is \$260.00 for the full course or \$130.00 for the refresher. Upon completion of the course and completing a 590 checklist, participants will be reimbursed the cost of the course. The reimbursement is from a DATCP grant.

My question is, why wouldn't a farmer want an NMP? An NMP is a tool that will help you manage your crop acres. To manage your crops, you must be able to measure nutrients available in your soil, account for nutrients applied as livestock manure, and nitrogen available after your legume crops. An NMP will incorporate your soil test information, nutrients available from manure applied to your crop fields, and nitrogen credits from legumes. An NMP is a tool to measure and manage your crop acreage—remember it can only be managed if it is measured. An NMP can be developed by a certified crop advisor (CCA) or by a qualified farmer after completing a DATCP-approved training course. The benefit of taking NMP training is the farmer will improve his/her crop management skills. In addition, he/she understands how to implement an NMP, even if, in the future, he/she would hire a CCA to develop the NMP.

If you are interested in completing a NMP this winter, please contact Dunn County Land and Water Conservation's Nutrient Management Specialist, Travis Drier, at 715-232-1496 ext 9 or email tdrier@co.dunn.wi.us, or Chippewa Valley Technical College Farm Business Management instructor Mark Denk at 715-577-3036 or email mdenk1@cvtc.edu.

Putting Money in the Till

by Richard Halopka , UW-Extension Crops and Soils Agent in Clark County

When working in private industry one day my boss told me "we need to put some money in the till." My first thought was what is he talking about? The simple answer is every day when you begin the day you turn on the lights and make coffee. Well, we need to pay those bills. How did we pay bills? We sold products, and in businesses you have an inventory of products. Some turn over fast and some not so fast. So, when he said "put money in the till" some of the not so fast inventory was on the shelf to long. You all have heard of sale prices or even fire sale prices— that is putting money in the till.

Many farmers, I'm sure, may have the same problem. Some days we just need "money in the till." In tight margin times, we may have to review our inventory and make decisions on our inventory.

Many will say "I don't have inventory," but you do and you may need to turn some inventory into cash. Look around your farm; you have an inventory of livestock, grain, forage, land, buildings, and equipment. I understand it is difficult maybe to view it as that, but farming is not much different than any business on Main Street or in the mall.

You grow crops to sell or feed to livestock, and you trade some inventory of feed to produce milk or meat. You have an inventory of land to grow those crops and an inventory of equipment to plant and harvest crops. You have an inventory of buildings to house livestock and store crops. As a farmer, you have a large inventory.

So, in tight times how do I put money in the till? It's a question that is hard to answer, but this is where management comes into play.

First, take inventory of all aspects of your farming operation.

Second, think about what inventory you could reduce. For example, if you have crops stored beyond one or two years, you may need to consider selling crops or adding livestock to feed the crop out and turn it into cash.

Third: land inventory. Are you renting or buying land because it is handy? Sometimes paying rent or owning excess land may not be best for the bottom line and forgoing the rent or monthly payment may return more cash to the farm.

Fourth, equipment inventory. Are you buying something you want or need or do you have stuff parked you haven't used for greater than three years? Everybody likes owning stuff it makes us feel good, but at some point, we may need to turn stuff into cash and put money in the till. There are wants and needs in life cover the needs and ignore the wants until times improve. Operations must be completed each day on the farm, equipment is needed, but there may be alternatives to complete some tasks and some of the older unused equipment may need to leave the farm to put money in the till. A person once told me if it has wheels you can always get rid of it.

Putting money in the till is a tough call, but as a farm manager you need to make tough decisions and get through these tight margin times.

If you need help please feel free contact any UW-Extension office or the Wisconsin Farm Center at 1-800-942-2474 or farmlcenter@wisconsin.gov. There is help for farmers who need assistance and there is no charge for the advice.