The USDA has extended the deadline for producers to update their yields and re-allocate their base acres until the end of March. I am sure this is a welcomed relief to our Farm Service Agency offices! Of course the weather is on all of our minds. I think we are all looking forward to a warm-up. I think many of us would like to forget the coldest February on record for the past century. I was so desperate for a taste of spring this past weekend that I shoveled a path through the snow to be able to use the grill. It is time for winter to start retreating! Any bets on how long the huge piles of snow will be around?

David Marrison, AG Educator

In this Issue:

- USDA Extends Deadline to Update Base Acres or Yield History for ARC/PLC Programs until March 31, 2015
- Buy your Ashtabula County Dairy Banquet Tickets by March 12
- Forage Focus: What Should I Reseed in My Hay and Pasture Fields?
- Weather Relief Won't Arrive Until May
- Many Conservation Options Now Available for Ohio Farmers
- Small Farm Conference and Trade Show – March 28 in Wooster
- HOPS Tour in Wooster on Friday, March 6
- Ohio State Guide to Weed Identification Available for Growers
- 2015 4-H Carnival to be held March 10th
- Ashtabula County @Work Photography Contest
- Ashtabula County Master Gardeners’ Spring Gardening Program at Local Libraries in March
- 2015 Winter Extension Program Dates

USDA Extends Deadline to Update Base Acres or Yield History for ARC/PLC Programs until March 31, 2015

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced Friday, February 27 that a one-time extension will be provided to producers for the new safety-net programs established by the 2014 Farm Bill, known as Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC). The final day to update yield history or reallocate base acres has been extended one additional month, from Feb. 27, 2015 until March 31, 2015. The final day for farm owners and producers to choose ARC or PLC coverage also remains March 31, 2015.

"This is an important decision for producers, because these programs provide financial protection against unexpected changes in the marketplace. Producers are working to make the best decision they can. And we're working to ensure that they've got the time, the information, and the opportunities to have those final conversations, review their data, and to visit the Farm Service Agency to make those decisions," said Vilsack. If no changes are made to yield history or base acres by March 31, 2015, the farm's current yield and base will be used. A program choice of ARC or PLC coverage also must be made by March 31, 2015, or there will be no 2014 payments for the farm and the farm will default to PLC coverage through the 2018 crop year.

"These are complex decisions, which is why we launched a strong education and outreach campaign back in September. Now we're providing a one-time extension of an additional month so that every producer is fully prepared to enroll in this program," said Vilsack. Nationwide, more than 2.9 million educational postcards, in English and Spanish, have been sent to producers, and over 4,100 training sessions have been conducted on the new safety-net programs. The online tools, available at www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc, allow producers to explore projections on
how ARC or PLC coverage will affect their operation under possible future scenarios.

Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium grain rice (which includes short grain rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. Upland cotton is no longer a covered commodity.

The Farm Bill builds on historic economic gains in rural America over the past six years, while achieving meaningful reform and billions of dollars in savings for the taxpayer. Since enactment, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has made significant progress to implement each provision of this critical legislation, including providing disaster relief to farmers and ranchers; strengthening risk management tools; expanding access to rural credit; funding critical research; establishing innovative public-private conservation partnerships; developing new markets for rural-made products; and investing in infrastructure, housing and community facilities to help improve quality of life in rural America. For more information, visit www.usda.gov/farmbill.

Buy your Ashtabula County Dairy Banquet Tickets by March 12
OSU Extension and the Ashtabula County Dairy Service Unit are pleased to announce the 65th Annual Dairy banquet will be held at the Lenox Community Center on Saturday, March 21 and will begin promptly at 8 p.m. This banquet provides the chance for local dairy farmers to gather together to recognize achievements from the past year.

The banquet program will consist of the crowning of the 2015 Dairy Princess; the presentation of production and 4-H awards; the election of three members to the Dairy Service Unit Board; and the presentation of the Farm Family of the Year Award. We are also pleased Scott Higgins from Mideast Dairy Association will be on hand to discuss the new partnerships which have been created as a result of dairy check-off dollars.

Tickets are $14 per person and can be purchased from Dairy Service Unit Board members, Tom Coltman, Wayne, Joel Baldwin, Sheffield; Dave Priester, New Lyme; Jason Brinker, Rock Creek, Matt Springer, Lenox and from David Marrison at the Ashtabula County Extension office at 39 Wall Street in Jefferson. Pre-sale tickets are required this year. Please purchase your ticket by March 12, 2015. For more information about this program contact the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008.

Forage Focus: What Should I Reseed in My Hay and Pasture Fields?
By Chris Penrose, OSU Extension Educator, Morgan County

The next time the snow melts off, it becomes the time of year to evaluate your hay and pasture fields to determine if they need to be reseeded. First and foremost, you need to make sure the pH and fertility is adequate for the forages you want to plant. If it is not, the new seeding could germinate then die or never produce to its potential. Next it is a good idea to know what you need for your livestock. For example dry beef cows probably do not need high quality alfalfa and stockers may need a higher quality and more palatable forage than what fescue grass can provide. Other ruminants can graze pastures close so orchard grass which stores energy at the base of the plant may not be a good option if you have sheep or goats too. Poorly drained fields or fields with a lot of deer pressure are not good options for alfalfa. So what should be planted? The following is a list of common forages that can be planted throughout Ohio and the characteristics of each.

Alfalfa- It is probably the best high quality feed for livestock and as a cash crop but it requires deep, well drained soils and high fertility for high yields. While it can be used for grazing, it is best adapted for hay or silage. Be aware that it can cause bloat when grazed by livestock and purchase improved varieties with good winter hardiness, disease and potato leafhopper resistance.
**Birdsfoot Trefoil**- This is a deep-rooted perennial legume that is best adapted to northern areas of Ohio and Pennsylvania, but I have seen more growing in southern Ohio over the past three years. It can tolerate low pH, poor soil drainage, marginal fertility and is non-bloating. It is slow to establish, subject to weed invasion so should be planted in a mixed stand, and prone to diseases.

**Red Clover**- Red clover is a short lived perennial legume but has several advantages. It can tolerate poorly drained and slightly acidic soils and has good seeding vigor. Seeding vigor is important because it can stretch out or improve stands. It is a good option for frost seeding, so in the next month, we can spread this seed on pastures or hay fields. Red clover can be hard to dry for hay bloat can be a problem when grazing if there is not enough grass present.

**White Clover**- This is a low-growing short lived perennial. This is a good legume to have in pastures especially if short growing grasses like bluegrass are present. It is a good legume if sheep and goats are grazing as they tend to graze closer than cattle. This is a good plant for continuous grazing as it is a prolific seeder, but bloat can be a problem. Kentucky bluegrass- This grass is ideal for pastures as the low growth habit makes it tolerant to close grazing. It forms a dense sod and spreads by seeds and rhizomes. It can persist under poor soil conditions and management, but responds to good management. Yields will be less than many other cool season grasses and is more drought susceptible than other grasses.

**Orchardgrass**- This grass is good for pasture, hay and silage. It is very productive "bunch-type" grass that responds well to good management. It grows best in well drained soils, has rapid regrowth and is palatable. However when it becomes mature, palatability rapidly declines. Common varieties mature rapidly, so consider late maturing varieties. Rust can be a problem in latter in the summer, so select varieties with leaf disease resistance.

**Ryegrass**- If alfalfa is the "Queen" of forages, ryegrass is the "King". Perennial ryegrass is a bunch-type grass that is palatable with high nutritive value. It has a long growing season and excellent yields with good fertility. Why doesn't everyone grow it? It is less winter hardy than other grasses, best adapted to areas like northern Ohio, it is not as competitive as other grasses and it is difficult to dry for hay.

**Fescue**- The grass we love to hate. During this time of the year, it is the best grass we have. It will stockpile well for grazing during the winter and retain much of its quality. It is a high yielding grass that tolerates low fertility, drought, insects and diseases. The problem is that common types have a fungus or endophyte in it that makes it unpalatable and can cause health problems in the summer months and pregnancy problems with horses. The good news is this is greatly reduced during the winter months and palatability increases. There are also varieties available without the endophyte or with a "novel" endophyte that will not cause problems with livestock.

There are several other grasses that have good adaptation for our area. Smooth bromegrass is high quality forage for hay and pasture and will retain quality better than other grasses when mature. The grass is adversely affected during stem elongation if cut or grazed. Reed canarygrass is a good option in flood prone areas but will grow in other areas. It is high yielding and very competitive but slow to establish. Purchase only high quality low-alkaloid varieties to increase forage quality.

Unless growing a pure stand of alfalfa, mixing types of forages for a new seeding is a good option. Consider a primary grass, a primary legume, then you can consider minor species to add to the mix. It is important to consider species with similar growth habits. For example, you would not want to plant bluegrass with red clover, but you could plant orchardgrass or fescue with red clover. Finally, purchase only high quality improved varieties of seed. There have been tremendous advances in quality, yield, persistence, insect and disease resistance which makes the added cost of the seed a good value.
The 2015 winter is one to remember. While the winter season had a delayed start for much of the U.S., temperatures and precipitation are now rivaling 2014’s records. Boston experienced its second-coldest February on record, but as far as snowfall, Mother Nature has proved to be relentless. Residents are still shoveling out of mounds of snow, as February’s snowfall was a record-setter. The Northwest, however, has been in an opposite weather pattern. Seattle even set a record for all-time warmest February with an average temperature of 48.8 degrees. That slightly tops 1977’s record of 48.7.

U.S. Farm Report meteorologist Mike Hoffman expects much of the U.S. to continue in this pattern, with the East continuing to be wetter than normal, and the West, dry. Hoffman says that could cause another delayed start to planting for many in the Corn Belt. “Below normal temperatures still expected for most of the Plains into the Northeast and Great Lakes, near normal in the Southeast,” says Hoffman.

The one area he sees being above normal is the same we’ve seen all winter: the West and Pacific Northwest. April, however, may be friendlier to the East, but Hoffman thinks much of the Corn Belt will be plagued with more colder than normal temperatures. “April then will shrink the below normal area,” says Hoffman. “I do not think the Plains states will be way below, but they will stay below normal, normal in the East and above normal in Northwest.” Hoffman says it’s not until May that most of the U.S. may finally get back in a normal weather pattern. “May temperatures, though, I took out all the below normal temperatures,” says Hoffman. “Above normal in the Northern Plains and in the West, and the Southeast and mid-Atlantic. I think it will be near normal for most of the Corn Belt.” Hoffman sees precipitation to be near normal for most of the Corn Belt and portions of the West, including California. But Hoffman is concerned about North and South Dakota’s lack of rain and snowfall.

“Here’s why I am a little concerned about the Northern Plains, I’m expecting below normal precipitation there, but I think precipitation will be above normal in the Southeast then also most of the central portions of the Rockies,” he says.

Many Conservation Options Now Available for Ohio Farmers
COLUMBUS, OH, Feb. 20, 2015 – Ohio farmers have until March 20, 2015, to apply for financial assistance to improve natural resources on their land. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service in Ohio designated several focus areas for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds that will go to successful applicants.

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funding is available for farmers in Ohio’s portion of the Great Lakes watershed to apply conservation practices that improve water and soil quality or provide wildlife habitat. Farmers in the Western Lake Erie Basin also have the option of focusing on creating honey bee habitat with conservation practices such as planting certain types of cover crops or planting bee-friendly field borders.

All Ohio farmers can apply for assistance to fund energy conserving practices on the farm. Using more energy-efficient fixtures and equipment for animal housing or reducing fuel consumption through precision agriculture not only saves natural resources, but can also result in significant cost savings for the farmer.
Seasonal high tunnels are another conservation practice available to farmers state-wide. Increasingly popular with specialty crop growers, these structures and the management practices used to grow crops in them can improve soil health, improve irrigation efficiency, and help control pests. From a production standpoint, seasonal high tunnels allow for planting earlier in the spring and harvesting later in the fall.

Organic farmers or farmers interested in transitioning into organic production can also apply for EQIP regardless of the farm location. While organic farmers can also apply for other EQIP funding, the probability of receiving funding increases because only organic farmers compete for these funds. All applications for EQIP are ranked for their environmental benefit; those providing the most benefit receive the highest priority for funding.

Applications for EQIP submitted by entities, such as farmers applying as a corporation, must have a DUNS (Data Universal Numbering System) number and an active SAM (System for Award Management) registration status when applying, a process that may take several weeks. Applications cannot be processed without this information. Information on obtaining a DUNS number and registering with SAM is posted at [www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill).

For more information about EQIP or other technical or financial assistance programs offered by NRCS, please contact your local service center: [http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?agency=nrcs](http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?agency=nrcs)

**Small Farm Conference and Trade Show – March 28 in Wooster**

The “Living Your Small Farm Dream” conference scheduled for March 28, 2015 in Wooster is aimed at small farm owners and rural landowners. The conference will provide them with the opportunity to learn more about how to make their farms work better, expand their operations or gather ideas on how to utilize rural acreage.

The conference and trade show is designed to help participants learn tips, techniques and methods that can help them diversify into new enterprises, opportunities, and markets. Participants will be provided with useful and practical information that they can use on their small farm or rural acreage. The purpose of the conference is to give participants a smorgasbord of ideas that can help them to live their small farm dream by offering a wide variety of educational sessions and trade show exhibitors where they can get more in-depth information, learn about resources that are available and even learn about how to finance a new venture.

The “Living Your Small Farm Dream” conference and trade show will be held Saturday March 28, 2015 at the Shisler Conference Center on the OARDC campus in Wooster located at 1680 Madison Ave Wooster OH 44691. Participants will be able to choose from 27 different sessions during the 4 breakout sessions during the day. Presenters include OSU Extension specialists and educators as well as USDA agency personnel, private business and industry experts and private guest speakers. The trade show represents industries, businesses, services and organizations that provide products or services utilized on a small farm or rural property.

Topics that will be offered throughout the day are broadly grouped under the subject matter headings of USDA programs/resources, Horticultural Production, Marketing and Management, Natural Resources, Ag Law and Safety and Livestock production. The conference opens with registration at 8:00 am, and an opening general session at 9:00 am. The conference concludes with closing comments at 4:00 pm. Registration cost is $60 per person, which includes lunch and morning refreshments.

The registration deadline is March 20. A conference brochure and registration form along with descriptions of all 27 breakout sessions as well as on-line registration is available at: [http://go.osu.edu/smfarmconf2015](http://go.osu.edu/smfarmconf2015)
HOPS Tour in Wooster on Friday, March 6
The Ohio State University Extension will be hosting its First Friday Hops tour at both Piketon and Wooster this Friday, March 6th. Hops tours take place the first Friday of every month from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The tours are hosted by Brad Bergefurd and Mary Gardiner. They will cover hop yard construction, establishment cost, bine training, irrigation, variety selection, fertilization and more. Attend the program at one of two locations: OSU South Centers, 1864 Shyville Rd., Piketon, Ohio or OARDC Horticultural Research Unit 2, 5082 Oil City Rd., Wooster Ohio. The cost is $15 per family. Please pre-register by the Wednesday before the first Friday of the month. To do so, contact Charissa McGlothlin at mcglothin.4@osu.edu or at 740.289.2071 ext. 132. For more information on hops go to go.osu.edu/hopsinformation.

Ohio State Guide to Weed Identification Available for Growers
With spring planting right around the corner, a new guide developed by an agronomist from the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences at The Ohio State University is available to help growers identify weeds in order to manage them before they take over. The 2015 Ohio State University Guide to Weed Identification is now available for free as an iBook and can be downloaded through Ohio State’s Digital Bookstore at digitalbookstore.osu.edu/book/ohio-state-university-guide-weed-identification.

The guide is an excellent tool for growers presented in a digital format that offers pictures of various weed species at different stages of maturity and 360-degree movies for most species. It offers full-page, high definition pictures for a number of the most common Midwestern U.S. weeds and basic intellectual tools that are necessary to successfully identify plants. The 205-page guide provides information on the basic principles of weed identification. It describes 29 families and 85 species of monocotyledonous and dicotyledonous plants. Plant descriptions include key identification characteristics.

2015 4-H Carnival to be held March 10th
The 6th annual 4-H Carnival will be held on Tuesday, March 10 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. during Ashtabula County 4-H Week at the Expo Building at the County Fairgrounds in Jefferson. This event is open to all to encourage families who are interested in 4-H to come and learn about the programs 4-H has to offer. The 4-H Carnival will be filled with activities and games for youth to participate in with their family and friends. Fun carnival food, like hot dogs, popcorn, and snow cones will be available by donation for children of all ages. Exciting and interactive activities and games will be offered representing each 4-H program area at the event where questions on projects can be answered by an advisor or species chair that has knowledge in the project area.

2015 Ohio 4-H and Ashtabula County 4-H Club information will be available for all those in attendance. For more information on 4-H programs in Ashtabula County, please contact Jenna Hoyt at 440-576-9008 or via email at hoyt.88@osu.edu or visit our website at www.ashtabula.osu.edu and visit the 4-H Youth Development page.

Ashtabula County @Work Photography Contest
The Ashtabula Arts Center and Growth Partnership for Ashtabula County have collaborated to bring a photography contest to Ashtabula County. Ashtabula County @Work is a photography competition and exhibit that will visually communicate an understanding of the diversity of economic life and work in Ashtabula County to residents and out-of-county visitors. This exhibit can help us view the subject of work and how it has shaped our lives and our county over time, how it impacts our lives today, and how it might look in a future of rapid technological and economic change.

There will be two divisions: adult and student (grades K–12). Adults may enter up to 3 photographs with an entry fee of $5 per photograph. This competition is open to professional and amateur photographers. Students may enter up to 3 photographs. There is no entry fee in this category. Entries will be accepted February 15 – April 30. The subject matter must depict Ashtabula County at work. Possible themes that might be explored in photographs could include
medicine, education, diversity in the workforce, immigration, the military, unusual jobs, economic inequality in the workforce, the chemical and plastics industry, 21st century workforce, art “works,” the agricultural and viticulture industry, public service, and work and play.

This is a juried competition. Only those photos selected by the juror will be exhibited. All accepted entries will be included in a month-long exhibition at the Ashtabula Arts Center from June 3-30. Prizes will be given in both adult and student (grades K-12) divisions. Adult division: Best of Show – $300, Best Color – $150, Best Black and White – $150. Student Division: Best of Show – $100, Best Color – $50, Best Black and White – $50.

Complete details including an entry form can be found at https://client.smarterentry.com/GPAC or contact Meeghan Humphrey at the Ashtabula Arts Center at (440) 964-3396.

Ashtabula County Master Gardeners’ Spring Gardening Program at Local Libraries in March

Even though there are piles of snow still around, it is not too early to think about spring. The Ashtabula County Master Gardeners would like to invite you to join them at libraries across Ashtabula County during the week of March 21-28, 2015. Join teams of the Master Gardener Volunteers to learn more about growing herbs, sweet corn or how to make hypertufa pots. This program is free and will be offered at each library across the county.

On Saturday, March 21, the Master Gardeners will be giving this program at the Kingsville Public Library from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon; the Rock Creek Public Library from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; and at the Geneva Public Library from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. On Monday, March 23, the program will be held at the Henderson Memorial Library in Jefferson and on Tuesday, March 24, the program be held at the Harbor-Topky Memorial Library from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Then on Wednesday, March 25, it will be offered at the Conneaut Public Library from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Then to complete the week on Saturday March 28, the gardening program will be offered at the Grand Valley Library and Andover Public Library both from 10:00 to 12:00 noon and at the Ashtabula Public Library from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

These programs are free however space is limited. Please call your local library to reserve your spot! A program flyer can be accessed at: http://ashtabula.osu.edu/program-areas/master-gardener-volunteers/upcoming-educational-programs. This flyer includes the phone numbers for the libraries. More information can also be received by calling the Ashtabula County Extension office at: 440-576-9008 for more details.

2015 Winter Extension Program Dates

The following programs have been scheduled for Northeast Ohio farmers this upcoming winter. Complete registration flyers can be found at: http://ashtabula.osu.edu/program-areas/agriculture-and-natural-resources/upcoming-educational-programs-deadlines

Fertilizer Certification Sessions
April 7, 2015 at Geauga County Extension Office

Northeast Ohio Winter Grape School
March 10, 2015 at the Geneva Lodge & Conference Center

2015 Ashtabula County Dairy Banquet
Saturday, March 21, 2015 at the Lenox Community Center

2015 Joe Bodnar Memorial Northern Classic Steer & Heifer Show
Saturday, April 18 at the Ashtabula County Fairgrounds

Trumbull County Fair
July 14-19, 2015

Ashtabula County Fair
August 11-16, 2015

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------

PLEASE SHARE...this newsletter with farmers or others who are interested in agricultural topics in Ashtabula & Trumbull Counties. Past issues can be located at: https://go.osu.edu/ag-news. Please tell your friends and neighbors to sign up for the list. CONTACT: marrison.2@osu.edu

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Readers can subscribe electronically to this newsletter by sending an e-mail message to: marrison.2@osu.edu. If you would like to opt-out of receiving this newsletter, please e-mail marrison.2@osu.edu with the words: UNSUBSCRIBE