



I.D.E.A. Industry Update - May 16, 2003

Gearing up for Canmore . . .

The I.D.E.A. 5th Annual General Meeting and Conference is scheduled to take place Thursday January 29 and Friday January 30, 2004 at the Howard Johnson Hotel in Canmore Alberta (1402 Bow Valley Trail, Canmore, AB, Toll Free: 1-888-678-4656). Conference details are in the works, so make sure to mark your calendars. Call the Howard Johnson to reserve your room now. Make sure you identify yourself as a member of the Independent Dealers Entrepreneurial Association. Bring your family and stay through the weekend . . . Canmore is a beautiful vacation spot!

Controlling Grasshoppers Without Pesticides

Brenda Frick, Prairie Coordinator of the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada, based at the University of Saskatchewan, has some advice for organic farmers who can't use insecticides to control the expected infestation of grasshoppers. These suggestions may also have some value for conventional farmers.

Frick recommends the early elimination of weeds and volunteer crops that provide the initial food for newly hatched hoppers. When the small hoppers emerge, they must eat or die and they can't travel very far at that stage.

Producers may also want to choose crops that are less appealing to grasshoppers - crops like field peas, chickpeas, mustard and oats. (Frick notes that some species of grasshoppers like oats, while others don't.)

Producers may also consider seeding barrier or guard strips of less appealing crops around the crops that hoppers prefer - sort of like hiding the desert table behind the salad bar.

\$45 an Acre for Grain to Grass Conversion

Details should be available by the end of the month on a new federal program to convert environmentally sensitive land from grain production to perennial cover. When the program was originally announced last July, \$100 million was allocated to help convert 1.6 million hectares to perennial cover.

Reliable sources say payments to producers will be \$20 an acre after acceptance of the land to be seeded and another \$25 an acre after establishment and inspection of the grass. On land seeded to native grass, \$75 an acre will be available.

All the applications will be received by the PFRA and then rated according to an environmentally sensitive index to see which applications can be accepted. There's a budget for each province and the program is to go for 5 years. Land not accepted one year, may make it in subsequent years. Producers will be able to apply for a minimum of 40 acres and a maximum of 640 acres.

Sources believe the program will be retroactive so that producers can apply on land seeded to perennial grass this spring. An official announcement of program details is expected in the next few

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weeks.

Schmeiser Case Goes to Supreme Court

The patent infringement case against Percy Schmeiser of Bruno, Saskatchewan will be heard by the Supreme Court of Canada.

In a case which received national and international attention, a Federal Court of Appeal Judgement found that Schmeiser had violated Monsanto Canada's patent on Roundup Ready canola technology.

Schmeiser and his legal counsel have now been given permission to argue their appeal before the Supreme Court.

According to a news release from Monsanto, the next session of the Supreme Court beings the first Tuesday in October and is scheduled to last three months. Monsanto Canada spokesperson Trish Jordan says the company is confident the decision of the Federal Court of Appeal will be upheld once the Supreme Court has had the opportunity to review the evidence.

Grain and Oilseed Inventories Down Sharply

Statistics Canada is reporting on-farm stocks of the six major grains at 11.1 million tonnes as of March 31. That's a decline of 5.2 million tonnes from 2002. Two consecutive droughts in Western Canada have reduced production and sharply reduced inventories.

Stats Can says the lack of stocks is likely to affect the revenues and profitability of producers, as well as the entire western Canadian grain industry, at least until the fall of 2003.

On-farm inventories of wheat, including durum, were just under 6.4 million tonnes in March, compared to 8.1 million tonnes in 2002 and a ten year average of 11.2.

Total stocks of barley plunged by almost one-half from 6.2 million tonnes last year to 3.2 million this year. The ten year average is 6.4.

Canola stocks on farms were estimated at 1.4 million tonnes, the lowest estimate since 1995.

Major Seeding Delay in Saskatchewan

According to the most recent crop report from Saskatchewan Agriculture, farmers in the province have seeded only 8 percent of the 2003 crop. The five year average for this date is 33 percent.

The report says seeding is most advanced in the northeast where 16 percent of the crop has been planted. The northwest is next at 13 percent seeded. All other regions are in the 3 to 9 percent range.

Going by crop districts, the most progress is 22 percent in the crop district that includes Tisdale in the northeast corner. The next highest crop district is in the extreme southwest corner where 19 percent has been planted. Most crop districts are in the single digits for seeding progress.

The crop report says last week's precipitation created surplus moisture on crop land, particularly in southern areas. More than 80 percent of southeastern farmers and almost 40 percent of southwestern farmers rate their crop land topsoil moisture as surplus.