Thursday, November 12 marked the first Yahara Pride Farms (YPF) informational composting demonstration event. The purpose of the event was to showcase the economic and environmental benefits of manure composting. In the early afternoon, 16 area farmers and six others involved in the manure composting trial gathered in the northern part of the Yahara watershed at Endres Berryridge Farms. This location is one of three manure composting trial sites in the northern part of the Yahara watershed. Maier Farms and Hoffman Farms are the two other farms participating in the composting trial funded by SARE.

The event kicked-off with an overview of the project. Andy Skwor of MSA Professional Services presented an on-farm composting factsheet and explained the temperature chart he developed that exhibited the progress of the composting piles at the three farm locations based on temperature. He explained that when using the windrow compost method, it is required that the windrow maintains a temperature of 131 degrees Fahrenheit for at least 15 non-consecutive days. Of the total peak days, the windrow must be turned on five of those days. The data collected from the three farms showed a promising future based on the recorded temperatures.

Next, Jacob Getz of Insight FS explained the nutrient benefits that the compost windrows provide based on data from a manure analysis and nitrate report. Throughout the discussion, many farmers were engaged and asked questions regarding the economical benefits.

After the compost trial overview, the attendees toured the four on-site compost windrows. The windrows ranged from the beginning of the composting process, where the windrow still exhibited elements of solid manure bedding pack, to the finishing stage, where the windrow components had been digested into even particles that resembled black soil. To wrap of the event, Jason Fuller, who helps manage the compost piles on all three sites, demonstrated the turning of one of the compost windrows. In addition to showing and explaining the compost turning process, Fuller finished by talking about the Tebbe compost spreader that includes a scales and spreading width of up to 100 feet.

Post event, the group gathered for a late lunch at the farm where attendees had the opportunity to catch-up and ask any lingering questions. There will be continuous communication with the farms who attended on future composting opportunities. A full report on the composting trial will be available at the March YPF meeting.
**Sponsor Profile:**

**Professional Dairy Producers Foundation**

By PDPF Executive Director, Deb Reinhart

The Professional Dairy Producers Foundation (PDPF) supports lifelong learning throughout the careers of dairy professionals, youth through retirement. PDPF is making an impact by funding programs and initiatives that grow the next generation of dairy leaders and facilitate a proactive and prepared dairy industry. PDPF supports programs that boost the professional skills of dairy producers, recruit the next generation through mentoring and other career development experiences and maintain consumer trust in production practices, like animal care, environmental stewardship and food safety.

The producer driven focus of the Foundation gives it the ability to move quickly to address industry concerns. PDPF understands dairy’s responsibility to uphold the public trust its products and production methods.

We are proud of our partnership with the Yahara Pride Farms agricultural runoff reduction project, because it is a producer lead watershed initiative in Dane County that is voluntary rather than regulatory. This program is a trusted resource and can be replicated in any watershed across the dairy industry. Also, many well respected dairy leaders are active in the Yahara Pride Farms projects and leadership. We love the work Yahara Prides Farms and PDPF can accomplish together.

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**Agriculture in the News**

**GMOs**

Recently among popular restaurant chains it has become a new fad to swear off the use of genetically modified organisms. Chipotle and Subway are two of the more popular chains whom have made it their marketing strategy to choose the non-GMO route. As Chipotle claims they serve “Food with integrity,” E. Coli is on the menu as well. The chain has been forced to close around 50 restaurants due to an E. Coli outbreak. It appears they have been focusing too much on GMOs rather than food safety. Among the general public, GMOs have become somewhat taboo as people are switching to more “healthy” and “natural” sources of food. The modification of food has been going on for hundreds and hundreds of years with our ancestors only planting the seeds from their best crops, or breeding their best livestock. The FDA just approved a new genetically modified salmon safe for consumption, finding no major differences in non-GMO salmon. The new salmon grow faster and with less food. The reality is that without GMOs farmers would not be able to feed the world, and food safety should never be compromised for the sake of the latest craze.

**China’s Lift on the One-Child Policy**

Last month China lifted its decades old one-child policy and is now allowing families to have two children with no penalty. So what could this mean for the Ag industry in the US? Since China’s market for baby formula is $19 billion making up almost half of the world’s imports of whole milk powder it could mean a lot for dairy farmers. Though it will take quite a few months for the US to see results from this lift—as we work through large dairy stockpiles from previous low prices, it could also be awhile before we start seeing the effects of the population growing. Overall this could be very good for the dairy industry here in the US.

*Agriculture in the News articles developed from information on agweb.com*
The Nitrogen Use Efficiency (NUE) Project, funded by a Conservation Innovation Grant through USDA-NRCS, is in full swing. More than 20 farmers are participating in the project in four different regions of Wisconsin: Jersey Valley Watershed, Dry Run Creek Watershed, Yahara Watershed, and part of the Rock River Watershed in Southeastern Wisconsin. By the end of this year, we will increase that number to 32 farmers, and 30-40 during each of the next two years.

What is NUE?
We view NUE as an assessment tool for farmers. It is an educational tool that allows all of us to know how much of N actually ends up in the plant. It can also be viewed as a gateway tool for those farmers who want to pursue more sophisticated N management tools, which account for spatial variation in N supply, utilize real time weather data and conditions, or both.

For example, one way to take a simple look at NUE is done by dividing the amount of N removed with grain by the amount of N applied as fertilizer. Using simple calculations like this and working with so many different farmers and in different areas of the state provides valuable insight into NUE in different management regimes and soil conditions. If the majority of farmers in a region have a higher value for this calculation than an individual farmer in the same region that would indicate that the farmer with the lower value might have an opportunity to benefit from a management change. Improvement could come in a variety of ways (e.g. lowering N rates, changing N timing or source), but would be different for each farm operation. If a farmer has a value much higher than the majority of the farmers in their region, they may still want to evaluate their management practices, but there will probably not be large gains to be made.

What does participation mean?
Participating farmers are providing corn fields for soil and plant sample collections that measure nitrogen levels at different points during the growing season. Some farmer participants have even decided to utilize a zero N strip. The value of having a zero N strip is two-fold. First, having a zero N strip is the only way to quantify how much N is really supplied by the soil. This will vary from year to year, as N supply is temperature and moisture dependent, but it is still a good assessment for those farmers who are wondering if their changes in management practices (e.g. reduction in tillage, cover cropping, manure or compost applications) are changing anything about their soil. It is important to not have the zero N strip in the exact same location for multiple years.

Second, having a zero N strip is a way to know the true economic value of the N applied in each year. Technically, N fertilizer should only get credit for the yield gain over no N applied. If yields are good, but NUE is low it is possible that N applications could be reduced and yields would be maintained. Additional testing would need to be done to know this for sure.

This data gathered from the farmers’ fields will be used to calculate the different components of NUE. The components are valuable at two levels. First, it is useful for each farmer as part of an individual self-assessment; by knowing their NUE on a field-by-field and season-by-season basis farmers can detect gains or losses in efficiency over time. Second, farmers can use their NUE results to understand how their efficiency compares with other farmers in their region; whether or not a higher level of efficiency is possible.

Continued on page 4 as NITROGEN
Is this just a research project?
No, it is important to note that the information is not flowing in one direction. This project has community education as its backbone; the idea that we are all learning from each other. We at Discovery Farms are learning from the farmers just as much (if not more!) as the farmers are learning from us. And in an even broader scope, both Discovery Farms and the farmers are teaching their neighbors, colleagues, crop consultants, and peers about NUE and the myriad of ways to improve it. NUE will be valuable for the future of nitrogen recommendations and nitrogen management in Wisconsin, and this is a chance for farmers to be part of the first step in documenting and improving how efficient we are with nitrogen.

One way we are facilitating community education is by connecting all of the participating farmers into an online farmer network. In this network, the farmers will be able to explore aggregated data, which will give them an idea of how farms across Wisconsin and different management systems are responding to the project. The online network will also provide a forum for discussion among farmers; encouraging cooperation and collaboration across the state. With a problem as wide-spread and deep-seated as N management, starting the conversation might just be as important as taking action.

If you’d like to hear more about nitrogen management in Wisconsin and how the results look from this year, be sure to check out the Discovery Farms Annual Conference!

Farmer-tested, environment approved:
Develop a winning cropping strategy
4th annual UW Discovery Farms conference
Date: 12/15/2015
Time: 9:00 am – 3:30 p.m.
Location: Glacier Canyon Conference Center, Wilderness Territory, Wisconsin Dells
Cost: $50, $40 for members of sponsoring organizations.
Other: CEUs will be available, noon meal provided.
For more information visit www.uwdiscoveryfarms.org or call 715.983.5668

If you are interested in participating in the Nitrogen Use Efficiency project, please contact Megan Chawner at 608-616-0575.
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Yahara WINs

To get a Yahara Pride Farms member sign (shown right at Endres Berryridge Farms) after completing the certification program, please contact us at 608-824-3250.

Upcoming Events

4th Annual UW Discovery Farms Conference
Farmer-tested, environment approved:
Develop a winning cropping strategy
Date: December 15, 2015
Time: 9:00 am – 3:30 p.m.
Location: Glacier Canyon Conference Center, Wilderness Territory, Wisconsin Dells
Cost: $50, $40 for members of sponsoring organizations.
Other: CEUs will be available, noon meal provided.
For more information visit www.uwdiscoveryfarms.org or call 715.983.5668

DBA's Dairy Strong Conference
Date: January 12-14, 2016
Location: Monona Terrace

UW Crop and Soils Extension:
Crop Management Conference
Date: January 12-14, 2016.

Corn and Soybean Association:
2016 Corn and Soybean Expo
Date: February 4-5, 2016
Location: Kalahari Resort Wisconsin Dells

Midwest Cover Crops: 2016 MCCC Meeting
Date: February 23-24, 2016
Location: Madison, WI

Yahara Pride Farms 4th Annual March Conference
Date: March, 2016
Location: TBA, more details available late winter

2015 Cost-share Program Sign-ups
The Yahara Pride Farms Cost-share Program will be offering area farmers opportunities to cost-share conservation practices again this fall-winter of 2015. Sign-ups have already begun, but it's not too late! If you are interested in particating in any of the 2015 Cost-share Program offerings listed below, please contact Conservation Resource Manager Joe Connors at (608) 444-4702.

2015 Cost-share Program Offerings:
- Fall cover crop seeding
- Low disturbance manure injection
- Strip tillage
- Headline stacking bedding pack manure for February-March 2016