



Discussion Topic

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A monthly resource for the Community Action Groups of Michigan Farm Bureau

QUESTIONS

1. How can your county Farm Bureau promote carbon trading to members?
2. Why is it worthwhile for farmers to sign up and gain a payment for their carbon sequestering practices, even if the price is low right now?
3. Do you believe carbon trading will change more U.S. acreage from conventional tillage to no-till? Why or why not?

Climate change: Farmers are on the front lines

Depending on where the news comes from, the term can be either “global warming” or “climate change.” Both appear to strike fear in the hearts of some scientists and many politicians.

Not everyone in the United States is convinced that fear over global warming is justified. Polls show that older Americans, in particular, can carry doubts that the often-cited upward trend of global temperatures is anything more than part of a natural cycle.

Farmers apparently are among few people on the planet prepared to do something more than talk about global warming and/or climate change. Farmers - especially those who plant trees or own forests or grasslands or use no-till practices, perform a service. Their practices, even if it is as minor as maintaining a pasture, take carbon dioxide from the air and seal it in untilled soil, a term known commonly as sequestering. For greater detail, read the story “Carbon credits” in the April 30 Michigan Farm News.

Farmers have been sequestering carbon dioxide for generations. But only since 2003, when the Chicago Climate Exchange was established, has there been a market to trade in carbon dioxide credits.

But since the political powers-that-be have jumped on the “we-have-to-do-something-and-now” bandwagon, corporate polluters and municipalities have employed a way to ease their environmental responsibilities and get the federal government off their backs at the same time.

It’s called carbon trading, and it’s simple, said Carrie Vollmer-Sanders, agricultural ecology specialist with Michigan Farm Bureau.

“In a nutshell, it works for farmers’ benefit,” she said. “A farmer can be paid, at current prices, \$2 an acre for row crops produced using no-till. The price is higher for forestland because trees sequester more carbon dioxide than row crops. But either way, all you have to do is sign up. It involves identifying your farm’s eligible acres on an aerial map and agreeing to keep those practices going for a number of years. And don’t think that \$2 an acre isn’t worth the money. Think of it as an investment you don’t have to pay for, one that likely will increase a farm’s revenue with time. Europe is offering a lot more than \$2, with reports saying it’s reached as high as \$14 per acre. And as the United States gets closer to mandated emissions reductions, the price for carbon credits could be substantial. Why miss the opportunity?”

Find a list of companies that can help you get started in the April 30 *Michigan Farm News* or at Michiganfarmbureau.com, then click on information/press room to find the *Michigan Farm News* story.