



New York State
Department of
Agriculture &
Markets

Crop Insurance

FARMER SUCCESS STORY

Planting Delays Highlight Value of Crop Insurance

GROVELAND, NY – Craig Phelps started using crop insurance over ten years ago, to help ensure that the family’s Edgewood Farm maintained a base level of revenue in the event of a crop loss.

Based in Livingston County, Phelps grows both organically and conventionally on about 2,600 acres, in a range of soils, from lighter loam to rockier, scabbly soil to heavier soils. They grow about a thousand acres of organic and conventional corn for grain and silage, soybeans, as well as processing vegetables, soup beans, wheat, alfalfa and grass hay for beef cattle.

Phelps feels that the yield coverage is the best fit for his farm because it allows them to make sales with the confidence that they will be able to cover them at harvest time. He also praised the delayed and prevented planting feature of his crop insurance policies, which pays a loss on insured crops when inclement weather prevents timely planting.

“We had an extraordinarily wet spring [in 2011], I think a record amount of rainfall in April and May put together,” said Phelps. “I think we didn’t plant a kernel of corn until the first of June.” Due to the late start, several hundred acres were not planted according to plan. A welcome feature in a wet planting season, he calls the delayed and prevented planting coverage “probably the biggest value of crop insurance.”

Phelps uses enterprise units to insure his farm. “That was my main impetus to get into crop insurance,” he said. In the past he had hesitated because he felt that the chance of a farm-wide crop failure was fairly low.

Insuring by enterprise units allows a farm operation that spans a wide geographic area to bundle acreage separately by FSA farm number or by county for crop insurance purposes. This way, a loss in one geographic area is not offset by a high yield on acreage with more amenable growing conditions that season, and the probability of a loss payment is increased.

As a grower of diversified organic and conventional crops, Phelps appreciates some changes in the way that crop insurance treats organic crops.

“We obviously get lower yields with the organic crops and that’s hurt our yield history, he said. “In the last few years they’ve improved that, and organic corn and conventional corn are now different crops.”



Craig Phelps, Edgewood Farms, Groveland, NY

“I would certainly recommend crop insurance to other farmers. I think it’s a very worthwhile product.”

Crop insurance must be purchased from a licensed agent. Enrollment deadlines vary by crop. The enrollment deadline for most spring-planted field crop policies is March 15th of the growing year. The winter wheat and barley crop insurance enrollment deadline is September 30th. A special type of crop insurance for pasture and hay, to insure against drought, has an enrollment deadline of November 15th for the following growing year. Pasture, Rangeland, Forage (PRF) crop insurance compares rainfall in the insured period with a historical rainfall index, and pays the farmer when the rainfall is below a chosen level of protection.

A video interview of Craig Phelps and other producers using crop insurance, as well as crop-specific fact sheets, are available on the website.



The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets has partnered with USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) to provide crop insurance education to New York State farmers. For more information, please visit the NYS Crop Insurance Education website at www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/CropInsurance.html or call 518-457-4531. The RMA website is: www.rma.usda.gov. To find a crop insurance agent, ask a neighbor for a recommendation, contact your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office or use the USDA RMA crop insurance agent locator tool on the web at www.rma.usda.gov/tools/agent.html