



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Office of Communications • 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-1300 • Voice: (202) 720-4623 • Email: oc.news@usda.gov • Web: <http://www.usda.gov>

Release No. 0054.06

Contact:
Ed Loyd (202) 720-4623

JOHANNIS ANNOUNCES NITROGEN FERTILIZER TOOL AS PART OF ENERGY STRATEGY

Agriculture could save up to \$1.5 billion annually by improving nitrogen applications

AMES, Iowa, Feb. 24, 2006 - Agriculture Secretary Mike Johannis today announced the release of USDA's Energy Estimator for Nitrogen, a web-based awareness tool that farmers and ranchers can use to identify potential nitrogen cost savings associated with major crops and commercial nitrogen fertilizer applications.

"The Energy Estimator for nitrogen provides our nation's producers with another new tool to reduce their energy costs and protect the environment," said Johannis. "Encouraging proper fertilizer management is part of USDA's comprehensive energy strategy to help farmers and ranchers mitigate the impact of high energy costs."

Nitrogen fertilizer is one of the largest indirect uses of energy on an agricultural operation. Fertilizer accounts for 29 percent of agriculture's energy use, according to USDA research data. Proper management of nitrogen fertilizer, including the use of organic sources of nitrogen such as animal manure and cover crops, can save producers energy and money.

Using manure instead of petroleum-based fertilizers could reduce costs up to \$55 per acre, based on February 2006 prices, while adopting management intensive grazing practices can save up to \$6.50 per acre in energy costs and another \$38.00 in reduced harvest costs. In addition, converting from conventional tillage to no-till can save up to 3.5 gallons of fuel per acre with a current value of \$6.83 per acre. Nationwide, reducing application overlap on 250 million acres of cropland could save up to \$750 million in fertilizer and pesticide costs each year and doubling the use of manure-based nitrogen fertilizer to replace fertilizer produced from natural gas could save an additional \$750 million and 100 billion cubic feet of natural gas annually.

The Energy Estimator for Nitrogen estimates savings in nitrogen fertilizer applications and use to help farmers and ranchers make practical and sound decisions regarding nitrogen fertilizer use on their farm or ranch. This is the second tool USDA has developed as part of its overall energy strategy to mitigate the impacts of high energy costs and develop long-term solutions for agricultural producers. Last December, USDA released its first web-based tool - the "Energy Estimator for Tillage" - to help farmers and ranchers calculate diesel fuel use and costs associated with various tillage practices.

Producers using the Energy Estimator for Nitrogen can select up to four crops from a list of commonly harvested crops in their state. Next, they enter the acres of each crop, pounds or units per acre used for each selected form of nitrogen fertilizer, and the nitrogen fertilizer price. Finally, producers select the nitrogen fertilizer application practices - the timing and placement of the fertilizer application and whether or not they used materials that reduce potential nutrient

losses to the environment.

USDA intends for farmers and ranchers to use the Energy Estimator for Nitrogen for guidance rather than as a sole source for decision-making on nitrogen fertilizer application. The Energy Estimator for Nitrogen identifies a producer's local USDA Service Center and provides links to state university soil and nitrogen information. USDA recommends that farmers and ranchers take their nitrogen fertilizer estimates to their local USDA Service Center, Extension office, or their crop consultant. To find your local Extension office, visit USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service Web site: www.csrees.usda.gov

Additional information about USDA's Energy Estimator for Nitrogen can be found at <http://nfat.sc.egov.usda.gov/>. Additional information about the USDA Energy Initiative can be found at <http://www.usda.gov/energy>.

#