Cottonseed program requested

By JACQUI FATKA

A COALITION of rural and urban Democrats and Republicans from across the country — both within and outside the Cotton Belt — are requesting that the secretary of agriculture use his authority under the farm bill to designate cottonseed as an oilseed so cottonseed producers can utilize the same risk management tools available under the farm bill as other oilseed farmers.

Financially struggling under the combined pressures of natural disasters and predatory foreign competition from China, India and others, American cotton farmers received strong backing from Capitol Hill as House Agriculture chairman Mike Conaway (R., Texas), ranking member Collin Peterson (D., Minn.), general farm commodities and risk management subcommittee chairman Rick Crawford (R., Ark.) and subcommittee ranking member Tim Walz (D., Minn.) led 100 members of the House in urging Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to use his legal authority to provide crucial help.

“America’s farmers are currently experiencing a 55% freefall in net farm income, with huge losses due in part to the culprits of natural disasters and the unfair trade practices of foreign countries that use high and rising subsidies, tariffs and non-tariff trade barriers to elude U.S. farmers out of world markets,” Conaway said. “Cotton farmers are getting hit the hardest right now, and they are doing all they can just to hold on without access to key risk management tools under the farm bill.”

The House general farm commodities and risk management subcommittee recently held a hearing on the crisis under the farm bill.

Tom Vilsack to use his legal authority to provide relief.

“We are deeply concerned that unless the secretary takes action, there will be significant economic consequences. We cannot allow the predatory trading practices of a few huge players in the world cotton market to destroy cotton production in this country, but that is exactly what will happen without action,” Conaway warned.

The American Soybean Assn. (ASA) also wrote a letter to Vilsack in support of establishing a cottonseed program.

“ASA is aware of and concerned about the difficult economic conditions currently facing U.S. cotton growers and the cotton industry,” ASA president Richard Wilkins wrote in the letter. “Participation in the STAX (Stacked Income Protection) Program in 2014, at only 24% of producers, leaves a large majority of cotton farmers with no protection against low prices other than crop insurance and the marketing loan program.”

He said providing farmers with the option to sign up for a cottonseed Price Loss Coverage (PLC) or Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) program would offer “an improved safety net.”

“We do not believe a cottonseed program would have a negative impact on the production of soybeans or other oilseeds or on vegetable oil prices,” Wilkins added. “The PLC and county ARC programs are decoupled, so payments are not tied to current-year planting of any crop, and producers can respond to market signals. This market-oriented approach is similar to programs in effect under the 2008 farm bill, when production of cotton and cottonseed was much higher but did not negatively affect production or prices of soybeans or other oilseeds.”

ASA’s support is conditional on the determination that the estimated cost of the program can be offset. If necessary, without negatively affecting funding for other farm bill programs or reducing funding for crop insurance and that it will not violate U.S. commitments to the World Trade Organization.

Choline aids fat metabolism in transition cows

DEMONSTRATING that supplemental rumen-protected choline enhances the export of VLDL from the liver in animals is challenging for two reasons: (1) differences in composition (compared to other animals) make it technically difficult to distinguish VLDL from other forms of lipid transport moieties, and (2) any potential increase in blood VLDL concentration from enhanced liver export may be masked by increased uptake of VLDL by the udder or other tissues.

To overcome these obstacles, cell culture models recently were used to examine the role of choline and methionine in liver cells and VLDL export. These studies demonstrated that choline, but not methionine, increased the export of VLDL when liver cells were challenged with NEFA concentrations similar to those experienced by transition dairy cows (McCourt et al., 2015).

The study also highlighted the important yet different roles choline and methionine play in liver function (Chandler et al., 2015).

Together with research in transition cows, these findings support supplemental choline during transition from the dry period to lactation to optimize liver function.

Conclusions

Fat mobilization in the transition period is a normal physiological process for mammalian species. With the high milk and mobilization potential of modern dairy cows, fat metabolism needs to be managed to prevent excessive partial oxidation of NEFA and TAG accumulation in the liver.

Rumen-protected choline supplementation during this critical period may specifically improve fatty acid transport and processing, thereby preventing metabolic disease and other maladies.

References


