

BARNYARDS & BACKYARDS



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Decision tool compares Risk Management Agency crop insurance options

A new online tool is available at the Risk Management Agency website www.rma.usda.gov to help producers assess and compare crop insurance options.

The crop insurance decision tool (CIDT) is available under the "Quick Links" menu at RMA's home page. Producers can compare crop insurance options for major program crops and enter alternative scenarios for their yields and prices, along with county yields and prices.

There are several alternative crop insurance options available for Wyoming program crop producers, such as corn and wheat and specialty crops like sugar beets.

Producers of program crops can select Yield Protection (YP) or Revenue Protection (RP). Both plans use a producer's Actual Production History (APH) yield to calculate the insurance guarantee; YP plans protect against a decline in yield, while RP plans protect against declines in yield and crop prices.

Most RP plans also offer the Harvest Price Exclusion (HPE) option, which allows producers to use the projected price as their harvest price when calculating crop revenue. Producers who selected Price Loss Coverage (PLC), under the 2014 Farm Bill options for their farms, are eligible to use the Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO). SCO coverage offers producers the choice of covering a portion of their

insurance deductible. Visit RightRisk.org for a detailed explanation of SCO, RP, and YP coverage alternatives.

SCO is available in certain Wyoming counties and varies depending on the crop.

Platte County Producer Example

We created for demonstration purposes a Platte County cow-calf and irrigated farming operation owned by John and Marcia Smith. Visit RightRisk.org and select Risk Management Profiles under the "Resources" menu to read the Smiths' risk management profile.

To begin using the CIDT tool, users select the desired crop, state, and county they wish to analyze. We will assume the Smiths want to compare insurance policies for irrigated corn and are eligible for SCO coverage. Their APH yield is 155 bushels per acre and they select RP coverage at 85 percent.

The tool generates a value for expected county yield; either use this value or select your own expected county yield, along with projected prices for the policy and harvest date. Assume the Platte County average will be 130 bushels per acre, the projected price will be \$3.85 per bushel, and the actual yield at harvest will be 175 bushels per acre.

The tool then generates the output in Figure 1. The value of SCO coverage would be \$5.97 per acre at a premium cost of \$0.74. The total RP guarantee or value of protection with SCO would be \$513.42 per acre.

Note at this yield level (175 bushels per acre) the Smiths would not receive an indemnity payment because total crop revenue is over the guarantee level (\$513.42).

The tool allows the user to mouse-over the chart to show county yields at different levels and detailed crop revenue information at each level (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Results for Platte County Farm Initial Insurance Scenario.

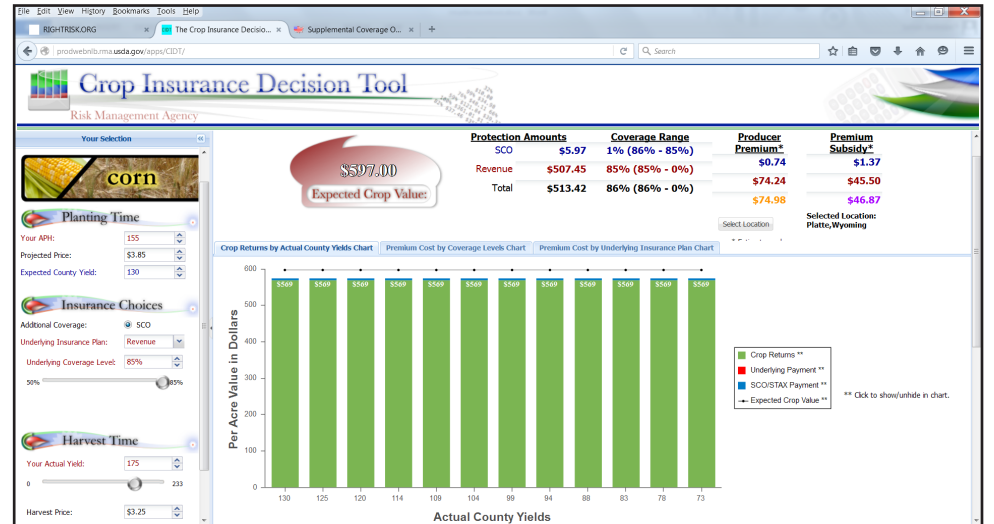
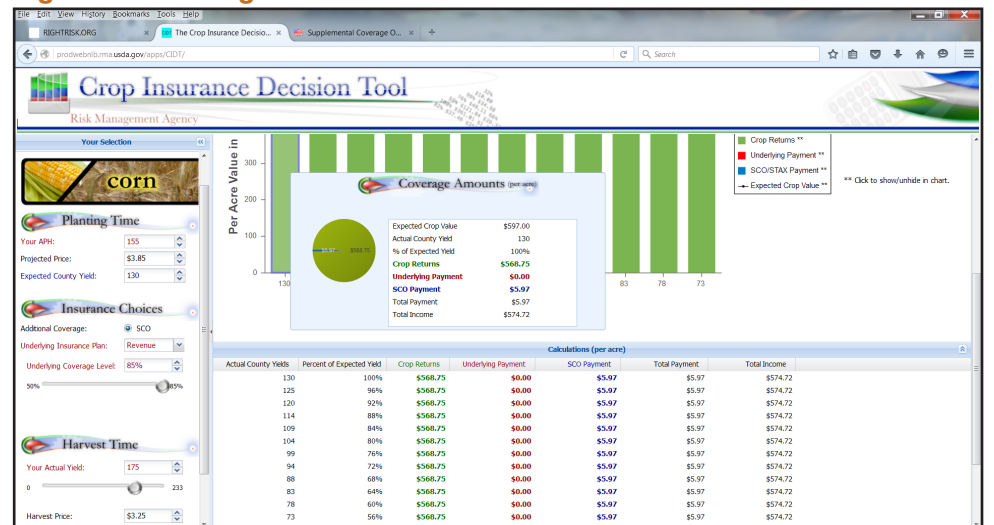


Figure 2. Coverage Amounts at 130 Bushel Yield level.



We will examine the effects of changing prices, yields, and policy types on the output for the Smiths' situation in the next installment.

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For more information
The crop insurance decision tool (CIDT) by the USDA Risk Management Agency can be useful when comparing crop insurance options and is a good first step toward addressing an operation's risk management needs. To use the tool, visit www.rma.usda.gov and select the Crop Insurance Decision Tool link from the "Quick Links" menu. For more information, tools, profiles, and resources for your risk management planning needs, visit RightRisk.org.

Sure sign of spring is getting those seed catalogs at Christmas

I received my first seed catalog the week before Christmas.

I considered it an early Christmas gift and cracked it open to thumb through the bright colors and dream about fresh vegetables. For me, this is almost as good as receiving a fruit cake in the mail from a faraway friend (not all fruit cake should be used as doorstops).

The strategy of planning next year's garden, for most of us, includes perusing seed catalogs and asking friends and family for recommendations. Sometimes others will offer "extra" plants they have started. The selection may not be compatible with what you want.

When making selections, don't just look at the colorful pictures and think about how tasty that item might be – do some homework. A particular variety may not perform well because your soil type, soil nutrients, and other growing conditions are different.

My wife and I have a 30-foot by 30-foot vegetable garden and a 30-foot by 30-foot hoop house. My first rule is only plant what we like to eat. Our garden planning homework involves recommendations from others, studying seed catalogs, and our own research.

To share some of that process, let's pick a crop – cucumbers – and consider the following:

- **The growing habit of the crop selected.** All cucumbers vine and do best if they have about a 6-foot circle in which to grow. Consider trellising cucumbers if space is not available. We did last year for the first time, and I endorse this method whether sufficient space is available or not.



Trellising not only conserved space but allowed the cucumber fruit to grow straight, and harvest was easy. We were also less likely to miss them while harvesting, which prevented them from growing larger than desired. This method also allows air circulation and further reduces disease incidence.

- **What type of cucumber do you want?** Slicing, seedless, and thin-skinned, pickling (nothing more disappointing than growing a pickling cucumber when you prefer a seedless slicer and vice versa ... slicers usually do not make good pickles, either). Do you need to grow a variety developed for the greenhouse industry? These will do really well in a hoop house in Wyoming.
- **When looking at a catalog, what do all those letters following the variety mean?** Many seed catalogs include information about how well the variety will resist certain diseases. The trait for disease resistance has been bred into the plant. This does not mean this is a genetically modified organism (that is a whole different conversation). We are fortunate in Wyoming that low humidity usually means less opportunity for diseases to take hold. Powdery and downy mildew are two of the most prevalent in Wyoming – particularly when growing in a hoop house. Developing a crop rotation plan to help manage incidences of disease is a good idea.
- **Seed catalogs may throw new words at you.** In the catalog I am using, the following appears in the Cultural Practice Section for cucumbers: "For

greenhouse or high tunnel production, use of **gynoecious** and **parthenocarpic** varieties are highly recommended."

» **Gynoecious** - Bred to produce only female flowers. Only female flowers produce cucumbers.

» **Parthenocarpic** - The production of fruit without fertilization of ovules. The fruit is seedless.

» To translate what they really mean: a parthenocarpic or gynoecious variety in a greenhouse or high tunnel would be best in the absence of pollinators.

• **Your own research.** If you've narrowed the possible selection down to several varieties and just can't commit, see if you can purchase small packets of seed and test the varieties. Check to see if they grow well, if they produce as expected, if they have the eating qualities you prefer, or if they are disease free. Grow more of a variety the following year if a variety meets your expectations. Continue researching new, developing varieties – your criteria may change over time.

Take in as much information as possible when making garden selections, run it through your filters, and make some educated guesses on what you would like to grow. Get those seeds ordered and get them planted. Only 100 more days until you get to enjoy that crop!

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