



First Quarter 2023 Newsletter

The Burley & Dark Tobacco Producer Association works for all tobacco producers. The Association will send news on important issues as they occur and a quarterly newsletter on a range of news and information to producers electronically. This is our first newsletter. Please feel free to respond back on topics you would like discussed in future issues.

Check out the website at TobaccoProducers.com or email us at KYTobaccoGrowers@Outlook.com

Message from the President, BDTPA

Welcome to the first newsletter of the Burley & Dark Tobacco Producer Association (BDTPA), I hope you will find it informative. Each year, tobacco producers face all kinds of challenges to producing a profitable crop; weather, high input costs, plant disease, insects and uncertain markets, just to name a few. Our new grower organization was formed out of the dissolution of the Burley Cooperative to provide growers a voice on issues affecting our industry's viability. We can't do anything about the weather, but the Association will work for all tobacco growers on issues we might be able to influence.

The Association is there for growers of all types of tobacco grown in the region whether it is for transplants, leaf or seed. Our Directors are active tobacco producers who know the issues, and understand the challenges of profitable tobacco production. On our website, Tobaccoproducers.com, growers can access information on the association, affiliated groups and connect to various resources on a variety of topics. We will work to keep information relevant and fresh, and encourage any producer to contact us with requests for specific types of information or data.

The BDTPA has been acting in support of our region's tobacco growers on a variety of issues. Earlier this year we found out that H-2A visa interview spots at US Consulates in Mexico were limited and we reached out to our Congressional delegation asking for their support in opening interview opportunities at more Consulates, and we understand interview spots were increased. The Department of Homeland Security proposed fee increases for USCIS services including H-2A application fees and imposition of an Asylum Program Fee and BDTPA submitted comments opposing these increases and we are awaiting a response from DHS. And just recently, BDTPA submitted a letter in support for a Section 18 label for a new fungicide product that has shown good control of leaf spot diseases such as frog-eye leaf spot, target spot and brown spot. We hope this label will be approved soon.

We also stay in close contact with the companies we depend upon to purchase our leaf. And, it is important to always coordinate efforts with other tobacco leaf groups. Building strong relationships with the Tobacco Growers Association of North Carolina, Burley Stabilization Corporation and other leaf groups is a priority. And of course, we know it is important to work closely with government and research groups. We have worked with the University of Kentucky Ag Economists to update tobacco crop budgets that companies often reference when developing contract pricing and our UK Extension Tobacco Specialists on agronomic research and new varieties and with the UK Tobacco Research and Development Center on potential new varieties.

Working closely with Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB), we were able to work with USDA's Risk Management Agency to make adjustments to crop insurance products with the goal of bringing loss ratios to more appropriate levels that will help make crop insurance more sustainable, and affordable, for producers. Our relationship with KFB is important, and we appreciate the support given our Association.

As you can see, we have a lot going on already in BDTPA, but our goal is to do more. We encourage all active tobacco producers to become members of the Association. It doesn't cost anything, and by building a strong grower association we will have a stronger voice in government as well as our marketplace. Join today by emailing your contact information, and type of production, to KYTobaccoGrowers@Outlook.com.

Al Pedigo, President
Burley & Dark Tobacco Producer Association



2023 Annual Meeting

The Burley & Dark Tobacco Producer Association and Council for Burley Tobacco held a successful joint annual meeting on January 19, 2023, in Bowling Green, Kentucky at the Holiday Inn University Plaza and Conference Center in conjunction with the Kentucky Commodity Conference. The photo above shows Association President Al Pedigo

addressing the nearly 100 growers and industry representatives attending. All types of tobacco grown in the region were represented. It was an encouraging turnout for the first Association Annual Meeting, and just as encouraging were the number of younger producers attending. The 2024 Annual Meeting is planned for the same location on January 18, 2024, also in conjunction with the Kentucky Commodity Conference. The Association is planning to coordinate a grower field day/meeting in southcentral or western Kentucky or northcentral Tennessee this summer. More details will be forthcoming.

Council for Burley Tobacco Update

The Council for Burley Tobacco (CBT) is responsible for the collection and investment of the Kentucky Burley Tobacco Check-off funds. Over the last several years we have watched as the check-off funds continue to decrease. Ten years ago, in the 2012-2013 season, CBT received \$142,794.44 in check-off funds from 13 buyers. As we come to the close of the 2022-2023 marketing season the check-off funds total is \$39,852.82.

The CBT invests the Kentucky Burley Tobacco Check-off funds in research, education, and promotion projects to provide long-term benefit to our growers and the burley industry. In 2013, the CBT established a research grant program in an effort to identify research projects focused on burley production and industry issues. The CBT has invested more than \$500,000 in research projects over the last 10 years, and we continue to work with the Kentucky Tobacco Research and Development Center today to fund research. Recently, the CBT approved partial funding for field work on a project to reduce TSNA in burley.

Another source of revenue for CBT is the partnership created in 2020, between the CBT and the Tobacco Growers Association of North Carolina to take over the administration of the Tobacco Administrative Grading Service (TAGS). In an agreement with the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, the two organizations work together with a third party to provide burley and flue-cured growers the service of scheduling and grading tobacco for insurance purposes. This marketing season CBT has received \$11,854 for administration of this program.

I encourage all tobacco growers to please take time to complete the short 2023 Tobacco Grower Survey. This survey is anonymous and confidential, but the data from the survey will allow our organization to have a better understanding of the number of tobacco producers and their needs. At the end of the survey producers will have the option to click thru to a separate form to share contact information with the Council for Burley Tobacco & Burley and Dark Tobacco Producers Association. The two forms are separate, so all responses on the Tobacco Grower Survey are anonymous and will not be linked to the contact information from the second form. The survey can be found on the Council for Burley Tobacco website at www.councilforburleytobacco.com.

Darrell Varner, President
Council for Burley Tobacco

Section 18 label applied for new tobacco fungicide

A Section 18 label for a new fungicide has been applied for with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture Division of Environmental Services for control of frog-eye leaf spot, target spot and brown spot. The product from Syngenta, has a full label request pending before the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), but that full registration is not likely to be approved in time for use during the 2023 crop year. Note that the Section 18 has not been approved yet, and the product cannot be used until after the approval has been finalized, and use of an unlabeled product can render leaf unmarketable. Please check our website at ***Tobaccoproducers.com*** for label updates, and if approved, full label guidelines for use.

UK's Recommendation for Spring Potash Use

Chloride (Cl) is considered an essential element for plants, so small amounts are needed by tobacco for growth, but too much Cl in the cured leaf can lead to curing problems and reduced usability of the leaf. This is why regulations limit the application of Cl-containing fertilizer like muriate of potash (0-0-60) for tobacco production.

As fertilizer prices have risen sharply in recent years, there is more temptation to switch from the higher price sources like sulfate of potash to muriate of potash. Recent field research conducted by the University of Kentucky has suggested that applications of muriate of potash may also lower levels of Tobacco Specific Nitrosamines (TSNA) in cured leaf, which has led many to push for more liberal use of muriate of potash in spring applications. However, this same research reinforced concerns about the impact of high Cl on leaf quality, and smoke panels describing the leaf with high Cl as "slow burning," "containing artificial notes," and "lacking burley character" when compared to low Cl leaf.

Clearly everyone wants to reduce production costs and reduce TSNA levels while continuing to produce the quality leaf for which we are known. To achieve these goals, the best management practice for spring fertilizer application, the University of Kentucky recommends up to 100 pounds of muriate of potash per acre to supply the first 60 units of K₂O per acre with the remaining potash requirement to be supplied from sulfate of potash (0-0-50) or sulfate of potash magnesia (0-0-22).

Producers should consider applying larger amounts of muriate of potash (0-0-60) in the fall prior to tobacco production. Ideally, fall applications should be made as early as possible, and definitely prior to the end of December, to allow time for the Cl to be leached below the root zone.

Protecting the integrity and reputation of leaf produced in the region is important, Researchers will continue to look at potassium sources and use-rates to provide the best recommendation that will maintain leaf integrity.

University of Kentucky Plant and Soil Sciences

USDA Risk Management Agency changes to tobacco crop insurance

USDA RMA, along with representatives from the tobacco industries for each affected type of tobacco, worked on changes to improve the integrity of crop insurance for tobacco producers. The primary change was to develop a two-tier crop insurance product.

Two price elections are provided for tobacco. Tobacco grown under a valid contract from a processor or manufacturer will receive one price with higher coverage levels available, while tobacco grown without a valid contract will be covered at a lower price and coverage level. Producers with a valid contract who choose to grow more tobacco than they have contracted will receive a weighted average for all their insured tobacco. The pounds of tobacco eligible for quality adjustment will be limited of the amount of tobacco grown under contract. These changes mirror changes made to flue-cured tobacco production a couple of years ago.

Producers are encouraged to work with their crop insurance agents to make sure crops are properly covered. You may also access a list of frequently asked questions (FAQ) by clicking [**here**](#).

USDA RMA

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April 1, 2023

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