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No Free Lunch¹

Our recent survey on a proposed ACRE webinar generated a number of comments. The most common comment was something to the effect: "I should not have to pay for the service"! It is very clear that readers are questioning why fees are necessary. Please allow me to explain why the fee is necessary.

Our computer tech person tells me that KSU only has about half the bandwidth leaving the university as compared to some of the private providers. A commercial service can take up to 1,000 participants; we can only provide links to 50 people.

The reason bandwidth is so important is because I have been on webinars from KSU where about half of the speaker's sentence is lost. Clearly that would make the seminar very difficult to understand if you only hear half of the words. This is the reason I wanted to use a commercial webinar service provider but that will mean additional costs and require fees. The survey suggests that a large majority of respondents are **not** willing to pay fees high enough to use a commercial service but I have not ruled out trying to do something using KSU's bandwidth.

Even if I use the KSU bandwidth, it is still not free. Our support staff manages AgManager.info, maintains our network, maintains our computer systems, sets up our

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seminars meeting sites, set up the webinar broadcasts, etc. Their salaries are **not** state funded. The support staff salaries are paid with user fees. If we run out of user fees, these people are no longer employed in the Ag Economics department, and we have no support staff to maintain these functions. We made a decision to provide AgManager.info without fees, but we still have to pay support staff to maintain the site, so that means fees from other programs. So while I may be able to work with a lower fee, it will **not** be a free webinar using KSU's bandwidth.

I very much appreciate your support you have given to Kansas State University and appreciate your participation in my many seminars over the past 30 years. I understand the State of Kansas budgets are tight but I will find a way to make my analysis on ACRE, SURE, and crop insurance available to clients. At a minimum my analysis will continue to be posted on AgManager.info **that will continue to be a "free" service.**

Miss-information on ACRE. Based on survey comments, there are still people who are not aware the ACRE signup date has been changed from June 1 to August 14. In addition, farmers that have signed up for the regular direct and counter cyclical program can amend their contract and change to ACRE. They just have to amend their contract by August 14. Expected payments will be based on one's price and yield forecasted for the 2009/10 marketing year. For example the recent wheat yield losses in Oklahoma have increased the odds of an ACRE payment on Oklahoma wheat but Kansas wheat may not receive any ACRE payment. However, the data might suggest a very different decision on ACRE for Kansas wheat by the first of August. Any webinar provided by me would cover these issues with the most timely price and yield data.

Thanks to all who responded to the survey. I will be evaluating the survey and will discuss the alternatives with the administration before making a final decision on producing a webinar.

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