Farmers Will Need To Cut Input Costs To Reap Profit

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Every attempt to reduce per acre costs will have to be examined this year, according to Mike Roegge, Crops Systems Educator for Adams/Brown Extension. Since seed corn is one of the major expenses, producers really need to determine if they need the extra protection of Bt's for insect control or RR for weed control, as these are added extra costs.

Reviewing the 2008 U of I corn hybrid trials from Perry, there was no yield difference between the GMO hybrids and the non-GMO hybrids (however, there were only 8 non-GMO hybrids out of 175 in the trial). Several area producers and seed dealers have said that there was little to no difference between yields of GMO and non-GMO on their farms.

There's been a steady decrease in the European Corn Borer (ECB) population over the past few years, most likely due to an increase in the use of Bt corn. In fact, U of I Extension's fall ECB survey shows the lowest ECB numbers ever recorded (as viewed statewide). Adams, Pike and Schuyler counties were all covered in this years survey.

As in recent years Adams led the state with the highest percent infestation, at 35 percent of plants infested. Pike had 22 percent and Schuyler 11 percent. This is probably due to the prevalence of non-GMO corn acres being higher in the area than in much of the state, due to price premiums offered. (The state average was 7.7 percent while Greene County had 7.6 percent)

ECB numbers can not be predicted for 2009. It depends upon overwintering, and weather during 1st and 2nd generation moth flights. Based upon the survey, there were some areas of the region, where there was yield loss caused by ECB on non-GMO corn. In other areas, there was no difference in yield.

For more information on ECB, see the Survey for Second-Generation European Corn Borer Larvae, Illinois, 2008 (REVISED) in the No. 24 Article 6/November 7, 2008 issue of the Bulletin. It's under Agr & Natural Resources on Greene County Extension's website at http://www.extension.uiuc.edu/greene/.

Bt's are also available for corn rootworm (CRW) control. Based upon our yellow sticky trap program this past year, there is very little concern for CRW in rotated corn in most of the area. CRW is mostly found in corn after corn rotations in our area. And the past two years have seen dramatic decreases in CRW populations in those acres as well. However, unless your fields were scouted during pollination and CRW beetles were counted, it isn't known if thee will be problems with CRW. However, most of the area will be safe from injury by CRW in corn-corn rotations, but not all.

The other trait being offered is Roundup (or Liberty). The RR trait costs extra, but the Liberty does not. Do producers need additional weed control offered by Roundup? For most it the reassurance of weed control if the pre emerge program fails that offers enticement. But how often has a complete weed control failure from pre emerge herbicides been seen?

Each producer needs to ask if there is value in a triple stack corn hybrid. If so, which component(s) offer that? Is protection needed from a pest that may not be present? Δ