

Increased Risk Of Foliar Diseases In Late-Planted Corn

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Rainfall patterns have delayed corn planting throughout much of the state. Late planting increases the risk of damaging levels of certain foliar diseases, particularly gray leaf spot, southern leaf blight, and northern leaf blight.

Several factors can contribute to this increased risk:

When there is a mix of fields planted early near fields planted late, the early fields can be a

source of spores for late-planted field. The early fields act a bit like "Typhoid Mary".

istance to gray leaf spot is especially important if the field is under conservation tillage (30% or more residue cover) and has had corn anytime in the last two years. Also, if a field has a recent history of southern leaf blight or northern leaf blight, consider those diseases in hybrid selection.

Of course, many producers have already purchased seed for this spring. If a field is sown late and the hybrid doesn't have substantial resistance to the diseases mentioned above, a fungicide application is more likely to be cost-effective. Figure 1 lists the factors that in-

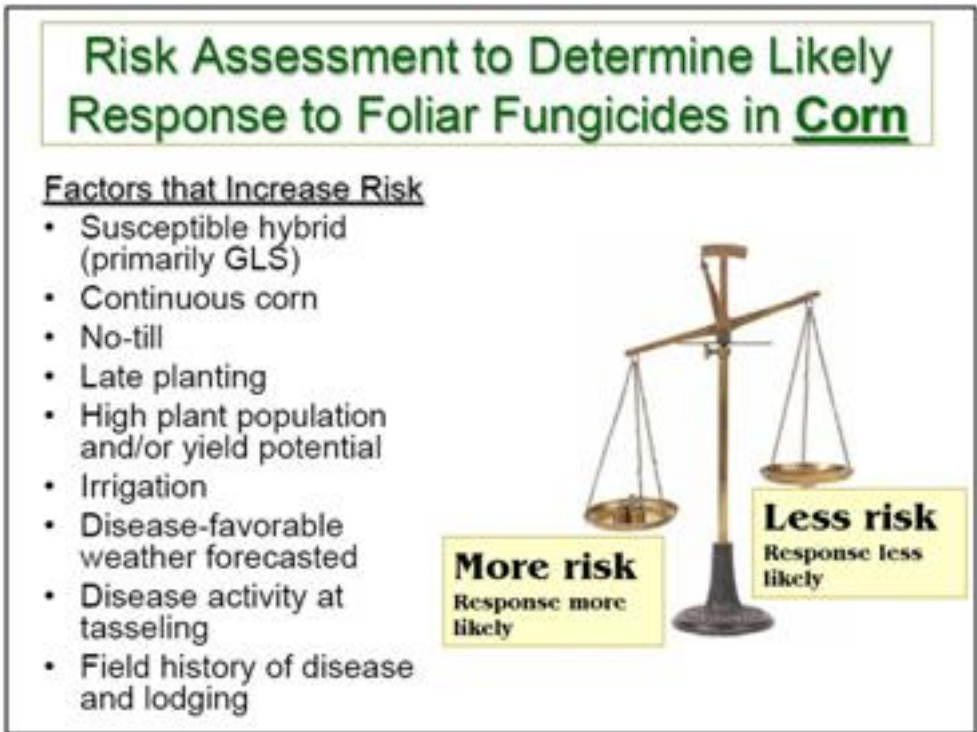


Figure 1. The more of these factors are in place, the higher the probability of getting a positive economic return from a fungicide application.

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Compared to early fields, late-planted corn is often at an earlier stage of crop development during periods of spore release and leaf blighting. Since leaf blighting early in plant development is more harmful to yields than late-season blighting, the late-planted fields have the potential to be hit harder than earlier fields.

Fields not planted until the last week of May or into June have the highest risk of foliar disease. Producers planting corn late this spring should use hybrids with adequate levels of resistance to gray leaf spot. Selecting hybrids with good re-

crease the likelihood of getting a positive economic return from a fungicide application in corn. The more of those that are in place, the more likely a corn field is to benefit economically from a fungicide application.

If you do choose to use fungicides, it is always a good idea to leave at least one untreated strip in the field in order to see if the fungicide provided any benefit. Sometimes it will but often it won't, and getting on-farm evidence helps in making future farming decisions. Δ

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