

Pioneer Talks Crops

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Corn harvest is near completion, and this has possibly been the toughest year for corn production in the upper mid-South in my lifetime. Yields have been across the board with dryland yields near zero and irrigated yields more than 200 bushels.

Soybeans may have handled the dry weather better in some areas due to timely rains, but overall soybeans are expected to have a wide range of yields as well. We can always learn things from a year like this, and growers should make several notes on cropping practices.

Evaluate corn hybrids based on long-term performance. Many

growers have asked why corn yields are down so much this year. In southeast Missouri, the 10-year average temperature from June

15 to August 15 is approximately 78 degrees. In 2010, the average temperature for that same time period was nearly 83 degrees. This would be the highest average temperature during sensitive growth periods for corn production this decade and likely the highest since the early 1980s. Also, little rainfall was received during that time period. This all resulted in poor ear set, pollination and grain fill on dryland fields and some irrigated fields as well. It is interesting to note in years like this, we do receive a lot of sunlight. So, if growers were able to get enough water to the corn crop, then they are seeing some very good yields. In fact, one of the most influential factors on corn yields on irrigated ground this year was how much water got to the corn crop.

Growers should make notes on fields that

need irrigation improvements. Some growers may need to update their pivots with more capacity, faster motors or drop nozzles to improve irrigation efficiency. Growers also may take note of those fields that did not flood irrigate as well and consider irrigation improvements in those fields such as underground pipe or by watering every middle instead of every other.

Each year is unique, and this season is no exception. So it is important to evaluate hybrids based on multiyear performance. Next year we may have a rainy and cloudy season in southeast Missouri and hybrid performance will be completely different. Thus, take a look at yield data that shows comparisons across several environments. Also, look at data that provides multiyear comparisons. Check out data from different states and how hybrids performed in those trials in other years. This is the best way

to evaluate hybrids to predict future performance on your farm.

Wheat planting is right around the corner. This year several growers have

expressed interest in planting more wheat acres. The price of wheat currently is very high and hopefully the price will offer growers the chance to manage wheat for higher yields. High-yielding wheat can be achieved by managing fertility, insects and disease. Be sure to look at planting good quality, treated wheat seed. This will help ensure winter survival. Other tips to improve yields are to split apply nitrogen, spray for aphids, apply fungicides for disease and control weeds early. Hopefully, with the right environment, there will be a successful wheat crop. **Δ**

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