

Planning For 2009

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This has been an interesting year with record high crop prices and input prices. For the most part, we had some record yields this fall. And now, we're faced with record problems in the economy. So how do farmers plan for 2009? That is a tough question.

The economics two weeks ago indicated it was a bleak year if you didn't have anything marketed for next year. But, it now seems that situation may have changed.

Nationwide, farmers didn't buy fertilizer this fall because of high prices and a late harvest. And, more farmers are planning on doing a withdrawal from the soil fertility reserve.

But before drawing down soil reserves, make sure you have current soil tests and know what is reasonable. If you have questions, contact your university Extension office or check out the information on the SI Agriculture website, <http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/regions/ag>. You'll find a fact sheet titled "Fertility: How Much Can It Be Reduced" in the Field Crops section of the website.

As a result of lagging fertilizer purchases,

there are now some opportunities since the global economy has slowed. It seems there is an over-supply of fertilizer, and the system is overloaded with nowhere to go. Fertilizer manufacturers have shut down because no one is buying here or globally. Now, that situation can be a problem or an opportunity.

If everyone wants to buy next spring, it could be a big problem. The infrastructure in the Midwest is based on the majority of the fertilizer, especially nitrogen, being fall applied; therefore, the system will not be able to handle the volume next spring. The result could be shortages and crazy prices again. Your best strategy is to plan ahead for all your inputs.

Talking about shortages . . . I have several friends who drive for national trucking companies, and they are getting an extended holiday vacation since there is no freight to haul. It's a situation to think about.

Remember, this is the season for giving, and many people could use a hand. Help out when and where you can. △

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