

# Some Thoughts On Food Prices, Yields

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**N**ow that grain prices are dropping over 50 percent from this summer and oil prices are also dropping, why aren't food prices dropping? It would appear that the ethanol impact on the price of food was a hollow claim, as most farmers al-

ready knew.

Now retail grocery stores are starting to complain. The food processor claim that farmers and ethanol were responsible for their big jump in prices is not holding up. A Wall Street Journal article on October 30 even questioned how the high food prices can be justified. In fact, the article says food processors are recording record profits, one reporting a 19 percent increase and another 9.5 percent. This story should get real interesting as consumer groups now see the farmers' viewpoint. I would expect to see consumers get involved as the economic slowdown progresses.

Now let's turn to the fields. With plot harvests finishing up this past week, yields were much better than expected. Here are a few results.

With the 40-year continuous no-till plot on Cisne soils, corn yields averaged 194 bushels per acre. The cover crop trials were on an eroded Bluford soil type. These trials showed that compared to conventional tillage the no-till ryegrass cover crop corn yields were 29 bushels per acre better, in a wet year. Last year, the no-till cover crop corn was 68.5 bushels per acre better when the weather was dry.

So, the final yields for 9 replications each year for 3 years was this: conventional tillage corn 87.1 bushels per acre, and no-till with ryegrass cover crop 132.9 bushels per acre. I think that the 45.8 bushel difference at \$3 would pay to plant a cover crop.

I currently have several winter annual legume cover crop trials planted, and next year we will do a nitrogen study to see what the benefit and nitrogen savings might be. The 30+ informal side-by-side comparisons this year and last year showed that winter annual legume cover crop fields had yield increases of 15 to 30 bushels per acre with the same nitrogen rate.

These results suggest that you should consider cover crops on some of your acres. Δ

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