

Subsurface Drainage Demonstrated At Bradford Farms, July 17-18

Tile drains let fields dry faster; installation, equipment to be presented

COLUMBIA, MO.

Persistent spring rains have left many row-crop producers in Missouri struggling to get their planting done. That has sparked increased interest in subsurface drainage, which lets fields dry faster and helps producers complete planting in time, even during wet years.

On July 17 and 18, producers and crop advisers can see demonstrations of tile drain installation at two field days at the University of Missouri's Bradford Research and Extension Center (BREC).

"Many fields in Missouri have subsoils that restrict water flow, pond water and dry slowly," said Peter Scharf, MU Extension nutrient management specialist. "Subsurface drainage can greatly reduce the time from a saturating rainfall until field operations can begin."

Research by University of Missouri agronomist Kelly Nelson has shown that installing subsurface drainage can substantially increase corn and soybean yields compared to nearby non-drained plots.

"Those yield benefits are worth a lot more dollars now than they were a few years back," Scharf said. "Drainage gives the crop a better early-season environment, especially in wet springs, by reducing seedling disease, oxygen deprivation, and stand loss. It also increases soil temperature, getting the crop off to a quicker start."

The Missouri Land Improvement Contractors Association is co-sponsor of the event, which

will feature the same program on both days.

Speakers include Nelson, who will give a presentation on drainage and sub-irrigation research; John Hester of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, who will talk about drainage survey and design; and Eddie Hoff, who will provide a producer's perspective on drainage performance.

Members of the Missouri Land Improvement Contractors Association (LICA) will demonstrate all stages of the drainage installation process, including the use of specialized installation machinery. LICA members are also donating labor, materials and equipment use to MU. "We really appreciate the drainage industry stepping forward to help us install a facility for studying the effects of drainage," Scharf said.

There also will be demonstrations of drainage control structures, which make it possible to use drainage lines for sub-irrigation. "For producers with limited water, this option will probably deliver water more efficiently than a pivot," Nelson said.

The field day runs from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day (July 17 and 18). Lunch will be provided to the first 100 people to apply for a lunch reservation on each day. To apply, send e-mail to hubbardv@missouri.edu (include "lunch" in the subject line) or call 573-884-7945 and ask for Thresa.

For certified crop advisers, 4.5 soil and water management CEUs have been applied for. Δ