The Complexity Of Seed Corn Value

WAYNE FLANARY

HOLT COUNTY, MO.

This winter, a lot of time is being devoted to growers examining seed costs. The change in grain prices and increased costs of crop inputs has growers examining costs and especially that of seed corn.

The real issue in the debate of seed costs is seed value. The highest value are those high yielding corn hybrids that consistently yield in the top one-fourth of comparable hybrids measured across different yielding environments. Hybrids with these characteristics have high yields with reduced risk within different yielding environments. Contained in this group of hybrids will be those with traits that can be used in your operation and some that may not provide an economic benefit.

An approach to this problem is to compile a list of corn hybrids which have yielded in the top twenty five percent across different test sites. Different site tests will provide information how hybrids perform in different yielding environments. Also, multiple year hybrid yield data is an excellent source of finding consistent high yielding hybrids.

To further sort out value, one should estimate the value of the yield protection traits. From an agronomic perspective, these traits protect yield potential but do not increase yield potential within the genetics of the hybrid. For example, if we have a drought resistant hybrid and compare this to one with a more extensive root system, both may have the ability to provide a more consistent yield under less than desirable conditions. But yield data across environments should sort out the performance of the hybrid so again the emphasis should be examining yield data not just the traits of hybrids.

The trait value can be easily identified when a particular trait is used to replace another cost. For example, the cost of a pest control application can be used to identify the value of the corn hybrid trait that controls the same pest. The cost used would be product, application, and also the percent control as control rarely is one-hundred percent. This cost could be substituted into a partial budget showing the savings from using this trait rather than purchasing the control application to control the pest.

By examining the value of traits, one should consider savings, reduced risks, and reduced trips over the field, value of knowing the pest is controlled and so forth. Some will be calculated as costs and others as savings. Some traits result in increased income and yield protection.

Also, seed costs and value of traits should be converted to a per acre basis. Use your planting population to arrive at costs per acre.

Seed company representatives want your business and work hard to keep your business. Use them for specific recommendations to help you through this decision making process.

For more information contact Wayne Flanary at (660) 446-3724 or Heather Benedict at (660) 425-6434, Regional Agronomists with University of Missouri Extension. Δ

Wayne Flanary is Agronomy Specialist with the University of Missouri Extension at Holt County.