

Weigh Options When Making Grain Dryer Decisions

PRINCETON, KY.

During the 2009 harvest, many growers, especially those who relied on natural air drying, struggled to get their grain dried down to appropriate moisture levels. With harvest finished, now is a good time for grain producers to weigh the pros and cons of purchasing a grain dryer.

"Having a dryer on hand gives you flexibility about when you can harvest and the moisture levels you can work with," said Sam McNeill, extension agricultural engineer with the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture.

If producers choose to purchase a dryer, they must decide whether a new or used dryer is right for them.

"When purchasing a dryer, growers should look at the economics of ownership costs versus operating costs. While used dryers will cost less to purchase, their operating costs may be higher. Newer dryers will cost more up front, but producers may be able to save some money with improved energy efficiency and by preventing over drying," he said.

Operating costs will vary with fuel prices and dryer settings during a particular growing sea-

son. Outdoor temperatures and humidity levels as well as the type of grain will also slightly influence operating costs, McNeill added.

Several used dryers could be coming on the market thanks to federal and state programs to replace old dryers with more energy efficient models. Therefore, producers looking for a used dryer may get a price break. But growers need to consider the dryer's condition and anticipate the amount of time and money to make any equipment repairs or services before purchasing.

In some cases, it could be hard to get parts or service for some used dryers. Some producers may live in a location where it's tough to find a professional to do dryer repair or maintenance.

"Producers should talk to their dealers and suppliers about the unit they are thinking about putting in to see if they will be able to do maintenance on it," he said.

For more information, producers can view sample calculations of costs of purchasing and operating a grain dryer versus natural air drying at http://www.bae.uky.edu/ext/Grain_Storage/. Δ



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