



The Chem Gro Crop Watch, Issue #7, 7/23/10

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Challenging! This is the most politically correct adjective that I could think of to describe this year. There are better words that come to mind, but they are way too colorful to be put into print. Normally, there are many positives that I would normally highlight this time of year, but unfortunately I have more concerns than positives this year. The constant excessive amount of rainfall continues to take its toll upon our crops. Below are a few talking points (good and bad) that have been burning a hole in the back of my head that I thought I would bring to the forefront.

Positives:

- We are about 1.5 weeks ahead of corn maturity compared to last year. Last year was very cool and moist, which created slower grain dry down in the field. This year, we have been experiencing many mid 80 to low 90 degree days which have greatly sped along the maturity of our corn crop. Corn matures by heat units, or GDD's; and we are getting plenty of them. Hopefully this will translate into drier grain at harvest compared to last year.
- Early planted soybeans (April) are now in R3 growth stage. I realize that there are very few soybeans that got planted in April, but generally they look very good and are at the R3 growth stage (small pods are forming) and are ready for fungicide and insecticide spraying. I have not seen any soybean aphids as of today, but there are plenty of chewing insects in these larger soybeans (Japanese Beetles, grasshoppers, bean leaf beetles). **Earlier planted soybeans visually look like they could be our money maker crop this year compared to corn, so this might be a good opportunity to put a little more investment into to hopefully create more financial reward in the end.** It will take approximately 2.5-2.8 bushel increase in yield to pay for a fungicide/insecticide combination at today's commodity prices. I personally think there is a very good chance that you would see this minimum breakeven return on a good stand of soybeans this year.
- Excessive moisture is still better than a full blown drought! Well, at least I think it is. I can remember back in 1988 when we had a severe drought on my family's dairy farm in Wisconsin. I can remember cutting the second cutting alfalfa that only got about 6 inches tall, fully bloomed, that didn't even make a windrow. But yet it still had to be cut to promote the re-growth for the next cutting. Cutting corn silage was also a disaster. Most of the corn only got about shoulder high, and was so parched from drought that it did not have enough moisture to ferment correctly in the silo. This created some very bad fungal type organisms in the silage which then caused many of our pregnant livestock to abort their calves.

The drought only lasted for that one year, but we felt the financial ramifications of it for the following three years. All weather extremes are bad, but I will take too much water vs. not enough.

Concerns:

- Corn is running out of nitrogen too fast! This is something that we all knew was happening for the last 2 months now; but now is becoming more evident than ever. After corn pollinates, it starts to cannibalize the nutrients in the bottom leaves and stalk to feed the ear. This is a normal process, however, the amounts of cannibalization that I am seeing is more of what I would usually expect when corn is closer to black layering, not just after pollination. I am afraid that with the large quantities of nitrogen (and oxygen) that we lost in the soil will cause the grain on the ears to excessively tip back. There will not be enough energy (food) inside the stalk to maintain good kernel fill up to the tips. I believe õnubbinõ ears will be plentiful in many fields come this fall. **Those who were able to side-dress extra nitrogen to their corn will pay big dividends!** I just wished the weather would have cooperated to allow more planned side-dressing.
- Fungal diseases in corn. Gray Leaf Spot and rust are plentiful in most corn fields from all of the humidity and rain that we are receiving. **Luckily, most farmers continued to spray their best looking corn fields with a fungicide which I think is a very wise decision.** My biggest concern about fungal diseases also directly ties with my comments about the early stalk cannibalization that I am seeing. When a corn plant cannibalizes itself early in the maturity process, it makes itself very susceptible to other fungal diseases, especially stalk and root rots. Stalk and root rot diseases are very opportunistic and like to feed on the weakened corn plants. Corn fields that were not treated with a fungicide will be more prone to stalk and root rots, which could create standing and harvestability issues.
- Sudden Death Syndrome (SDS) in soybeans? From my many observations in past years, when soybeans are planted in cold, wet, and compacted soils; and the weather continues to be cold and wet after emergence, SDS can become quite a problem if July and August also remain wet. So far, in my opinion, we seem to be on tract for SDS to explode in many fields. Hopefully breeding tolerances for SDS has improved in the latest soybean genetics, as this seems to be our best solution against this disease. I really do hope that I am wrong on my SDS prediction, as it will be hard to stomach a poor corn crop and soybean crop.



That's my 2 cents worthí ..the choice and decision is always yours.

Lonne