



## **The Chem Gro Crop Watch, Issue #1, 3/15/12**

Lonne Fry, CCA, Sales Agronomist, [lfry@chemgroil.com](mailto:lfry@chemgroil.com), 309-221-5000

**Thanks to my fan club of about three.** You may or may not have noticed, but it has been a while since I have written a Crop Watch update. I had about 3 customers who literally called me up and asked if “I was still alive?” because they have not received any emails from me for quite a while. “Yes”. I said, as I reassured them that I was still alive, and still employed for that matter. The truth of the matter is that I was suffering from a severe writer’s block last fall and winter from my bubble being burst as I found out that “I don’t know beans about soybeans!!” Let me begin to explain myself.

Last spring, we at Chem Gro set up some creative and interesting side by side comparisons in soybeans in attempt to achieve higher yields. Many of these comparisons were entered into the Illinois Soybean Association yield challenge and the rest were done for our own personal efforts on a few select farmers. By mid-summer, I was feeling pretty good about what we have set up, and I just KNEW that we were going to see some exciting yield increases in soybeans (after all, some of these treatments cost over \$60.00/acre, and when you are putting that much “stuff” on it just has to work...right?). Late summer came, and we experienced very dry heat, low humidity, and no rain during pod fill for our soybean crop. I can still remember seeing those soybean crops wilting under the intense winds and no moisture. At this point, I just KNEW that our soybean crop was going to be horrible, and I started blabbing my mouth that we would be lucky to make 40 bushel beans.

Harvest came. Many soybean fields were making 60-70 bushel averages. Several farmers said that the 2011 soybean crop was some of the highest yields that they have ever raised. All of our Chem Gro *really cool* soybean experiments made anywhere from .5 bushel better to 3 bushel less, with the vast majority making exactly 0 bushel return. Not only did our experiments not work, but we had a negative financial return on almost all of them. My kids would call these results an “Epic Fail”. I then succumbed to the harsh reality that “I don’t know beans about soybeans”. I was mad. And I mean mad! I won’t go into the conversations that I had after that, but the adjectives that I used to describe the nature of a soybean crop was extremely colorful!

Winter came. I read the published yield results from Monsanto’s demonstration reports out of Monmouth, IL; and Beck Hybrids practical farm research from Central Illinois. These are also really good “thinking out of the box” type experiments. Like ours at Chem Gro, the vast majority of their soybean yield increase experimental plots were an epic fail, too. I started feeling a little better about myself.

Last week, I attended the Illinois Soybean Association yield challenge meeting. At the meeting, they summarized the state wide yield results, and had several “high yield” guest speakers, including Kip Cullers, (who made 160 bushels soybean in his contest field last season). Many of the guest speakers shared their failures and successes stories in growing soybeans over the years. After I left, I felt like my old self again; motivated to try some new ideas and tweak some old ones to achieve high yielding soybeans. Kip Cullers gave an excellent presentation, and I wrote down a quote from him that summarizes my same feelings on soybeans that you need to punish them early to make them yield. Kip said “*If you are not willing to make it hurt, don’t waste your time*”. Oh-yeah! Bring on the pain! ☺

**Glyphosate Resistant Waterhemp.** This has definitely been the buzz in conversations and grower meetings during the last few months. The reality is, it is here; in Hancock County. Now we have to learn to manage it. In corn, that is relatively easy with the herbicides that we have. Soybeans are a bit trickier, but using a **FULL RATE** of residual herbicides is the name of the game here. I feel really good about our customers that we spray for here at Chem Gro Inc. Almost all of customers out the Adrian, IL office that I work out have always put a ½ rate residual down in the 1<sup>st</sup> herbicide pass in the past years. After talking about the resistance issue during pre-pay this winter, almost all of our customers were very receptive in spending another \$5.00/acre in applying the full rate herbicide in the first pass, and many are adding in another residual in the 2<sup>nd</sup> pass, too! **I greatly appreciate all of our customers who are willing to prevent a problem than trying to solve it once it occurs!**

**May in March?** With the unseasonably warm winter, and now having what seems like May temperatures in March has probably got many of you wondering how soon to start planting corn. I just looked up the 10:00 am 4” deep soil temperatures, and wow! We are really gaining some heat units fast! Most of Illinois is already above the 50 degrees soil temperature bench mark that we use for planting corn. If we happen to miss any rain showers in the next few days, it will be dry enough to work fields and plant corn in a very good seed bed. The million dollar question is, “should I plant now or wait?” No matter which decision you choose, we really won’t know what is the right choice is until about October when everything is harvested and weighed. Don’t you just love hindsight?!!!!

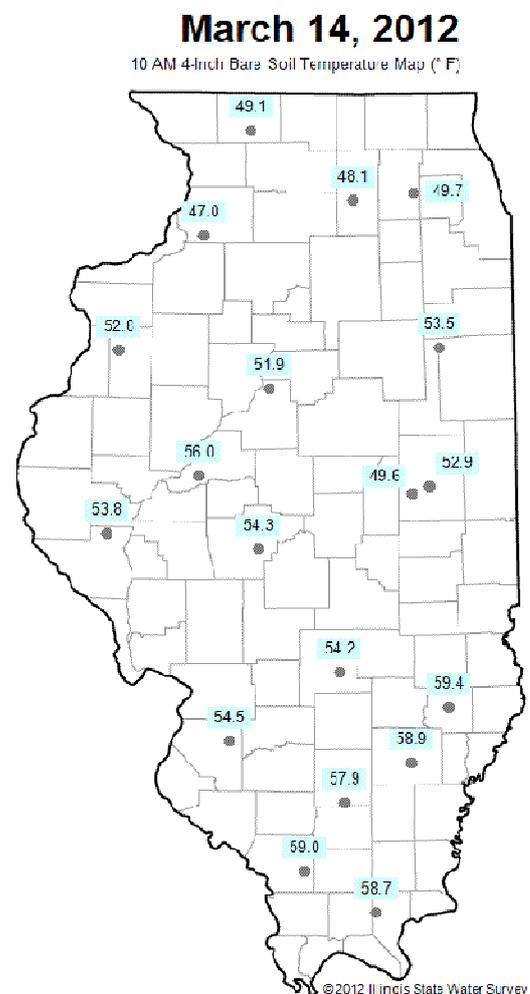
**Pros:** 1. *If the weather stays warm and mild*, early planted corn could have a huge advantage in gaining another 3 weeks of growing season than what it normally would be exposed to. Full season hybrids can really excel under this type of environment and capture more yield potential.

2. Drier corn in the fall. Planting corn very early in good conditions can help you capture some of those early September markets.

3. If it doesn’t work out the first time, you should have plenty of time to replant during the more normal time of planting season.

**Cons:** 1. The crop insurance planting date for Hancock County is April 6<sup>th</sup>, from what I have been told. Planting before this puts you at risk for not being in the program. This is something that needs to be considered in your program if you need the insurance backing.

2. Replant seed may be hard to get, especially the top genetic hybrids from what I have been hearing of the general corn seed supply this year.



That’s my 2 cents worth.....the choice and decision is always yours.

Lonne