



Hey everyone,

Been a while since I sent out an update, and as we near the end of the season I figured it would be a good time to give a brief summary of where we are now. While I would love to just fill these updates full of good things, sometimes bad things happen and provide countless learning experiences, whether we wanted them or not. Overall though, we really are pleased with this year and excited for harvest.

Corn – The Good

Corn is looking phenomenal and it's had near ideal weather. There's not too much to report at this time. As I mentioned in the Financials update, we sprayed fungicide. Unfortunately, great corn growing weather often means great corn **disease** weather as well. Early in season, I heard some reports of Gray Leaf Spot, an aggressive fungal disease, showing up earlier than normal in corn, severely impacting Illinois and several surrounding states. And after some checking, we confirmed we had an amount that had reached an economic threshold. While I don't like spraying fungicides, there are times when they are warranted and I can conservatively estimate we saved at least 10% yield by choosing a fungicide this year. In other news, our variety plot results will be interesting to say the least. Just a quick walk through shows some that look impressive..... aaaand some companies we will not be pursuing in the future. But hey, it was free seed and a great learning tool. Plots will be a yearly practice in both corn and soybeans in future years.

Wheat – The Bad

It was definitely a rough year for wheat in our area. The field averaged about 72 bushels, which is obviously far below our yield goal of 100, but on par with the other disappointed wheat growers in our immediate area. I use the U of I wheat trials extensively for variety research and historical information, and our wheat yield this year was the same as the U of I average wheat yield during the 2012 drought. While we're convinced we did everything agronomically correct, we didn't have the rain to back it up. While yield was disappointing, we still strongly believe the potential for wheat is there (as shown by local trials) and cannot justify quitting after a single failure. Because of that, we will be planting more acres to wheat this fall and are excited to give it another go!

Soybeans – The Ugly

This year was an educational year for soybeans. This was our first go at Non-GMO, and the beans themselves look fantastic as far as I've seen. They appear to be developing well with no significant signs of disease and we're very excited to see how they yield.

We have had relatively good luck with all fields except one, which has had issues from the start, one after another. It started with less than stellar emergence due to some severe drought immediately after planting, lasting about 3 weeks. While we didn't immediately realize it, this was also critical to our weed control (or lack thereof). Residual herbicides are crucial. They prevent new weed establishment, typically for a couple weeks, but require some rain for activation. So, by some stroke of terrible luck, in the same catastrophic time period when our wheat was frying to death, our soybeans were not germinating in this field, and our residual herbicide was sitting on the surface of the ground degrading, leaving weeds free to grow. Then, the residual applied later in season got 3.5 inches of rain at once. Goodbye residual. What a year. It looks absolutely atrocious and was obviously not our intention. But it's humbling and should, and does, happen to everyone once and a while.

While we could spend the entire season worrying, that would be useless since, 1) few logical decisions are made in an emotional state and 2) I have yet to either make it rain or kill a weed by worrying at it. So, in this time, we've come up with about 20 different factors that played into our lack of weed control, some factors we could have controlled and others we could not. We think by changing a few of our future decisions, we would not have the same issues. We believe Non-GMO soybeans are the way to go, not only in profitability, but also as we try to distinguish ourselves from the pack. But, are we 100% committed to Non-GMO beans every year, forever? No. But we think we can make it work, and still have many things we'd like to change before we give up on it, but only time will tell. While we will be completely reasonable and change course if it can't be done, a single failure does not justify giving up.

It's definitely been a busy few weeks, the new combine is almost field ready, the corn head has been adapted to fit onto it and partially rebuilt, and we purchased a different bean/wheat head for it. Time not spent on those projects is now dedicated to planning mode for next year. I've narrowed down the wheat hybrids from 25+ to about 6 and will be getting pricing this week before we make the final decision on which 3 hybrids will be planted this fall. Cover crop decisions for fall are being put together also. Chemical/fertilizer plans are still being designed but should be completed soon. Hybrid choices haven't been made yet as we'd like to see how our own trials and outside trials turn out before making any solid decisions.

Next update should be a little different... and less wordy. The cover crop mix that followed part of our wheat acres has really taken off. I'll take pictures of several of the species and give some bullet points on why each species was chosen and what the next steps are for those acres.

Frank