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Farm Update

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AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES
EDUCATION

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June 1, 2024

Wet Weather Challenges

Crops were off to a great start this year. Rain since the second week of May has kept fields continuously wet, making it difficult to plant, spray, side dress corn, and bale hay. The 8-10 inches of rain that fell May 23-26 was the tipping point, resulting in significant flooding and ponding across the county.

Corn is facing several challenges. First, are fields that need to be planted. I've had some calls about switching to soybeans on land that has had atrazine applied. My advice is to plant corn if at all possible. We can provide atrazine soil tests but in most cases, the amount of atrazine remaining in the soil will exceed the tolerance of soybeans. Plan to continue with the maturity groups you have selected. A lot of time goes into selecting the best varieties for your fields, planting later does not change that. We do not recommend switching to earlier maturities to reduce the risk of frost damage to corn until June 15.

Yellow, stunted corn is a problem throughout the county. This is simply due to the depletion of oxygen in the soil, and it will recover. Side dressing nitrogen as soon as conditions allow will help tremendously. If preplant nitrogen is already down it is very unlikely additional will be needed. If you have concerns about nitrogen remaining in fields of prolonged standing

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water, a nitrate soil test collected to 12 inches deep and immediately dried will help determine nitrogen numbers remaining in the soil.

Another concern for corn is fields that have not been sprayed with a post-herbicide application. This problem is two-fold. First, the larger weeds are less likely to die. Second, many of the herbicides have corn height restrictions. Sprayer nozzle drop attachments are a must for larger corn. Herbicide directed into the plant whorl can cause injury and results in less herbicide on the weeds and soil surface.

Corn was very blown around in the wind of May 26. The good news is that the corn was still small enough that the continuous root growth will secure these plants firmly to the soil once again. Some plants may crook at the soil line, but standability and yield later in the season will not be affected.

The largest challenge soybeans face is the mud deposited onto the plants following the big rain last Sunday. We've all seen this but not at the plant height so many acres were in last week leaving the entire plant covered. There will be muddy soybeans that recover, muddy soybeans that die, and some fields will be a mix of dead and living. The decision to replant these areas will be on a case by case basis. If the same maturity group is planted, how will that affect harvest timing? If an earlier maturity is chosen what would you choose?

If you choose the same maturity group, plan on returning to that field a second time with the combine to harvest the replant areas, and time fungicide for when the first planting is ready. If you can get some early varieties to replant with, hoping they will be ready to harvest with the first, get the earliest possible.

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Whether you choose to replant or not, you are lucky that most of these fields were not blooming. For survivor plants/fields it is too early in the season to expect anything less than full yield potential. But how do you decide if there are enough survivors to not replant? When it comes to filling in a thin stand with a 30" row planter, Purdue has found the final stand must be below 66,000 before any increase in yield is found. The second planting can damage some emerged plants, and the late planting yield potential is lower due to later planting and competition from emerged plants. They have found it is typically better to do nothing than to invest time and money attempting to thicken a thin stand.

By the time you read this article, 7 days will have passed since the storm. We should be able to tell if the muddy beans are going to survive and continue growing or die and require replanting.

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