

Pre-Harvest Scouting

Scouting fields before harvest may be key to a successful harvest this year, if nothing else, because of the wide range of stress events many growers' fields have gone through this growing season. I like to use this expression this time of year. You've likely heard an elephant never forgets; corn plants are no different.

This time of year, many of the stressful events that first occurred around planting or even during pollination can still be observed when examining a corn crop. There is still time to note the stressors and change the 2025 crop plans. However, soybeans can be a bit trickier figuring out when individual stressors occur due to the indeterminate growth habits of soybean varieties typically grown in Illinois.

A Corn Plant Never Forgets

If readers remember my last newsletter earlier, I discussed what to possibly expect post-pollination and key plant functions that corn fields would be going through. Every year, it seems like there are a few pivotal dates that, after the fact, planting operations should have been paused. If growers remember, a short planting window presented itself from around the 2nd weekend to the third week in April. Shortly thereafter, we experienced below-average day and nighttime temperatures along with wet soil conditions due to continued rainy conditions that persisted until the 2nd week of May.

Throughout the summer, I have tracked many of these fields that were planted in this April time

Agronomist Notebook

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frame, and those fields may have benefited from not being planted in that time frame because of the stressor that can still be identified today.

Some of those stressors have ranged from any or all the following that occurred around planting:

1. Tomahawk Roots – caused by sidewall compaction due to wet planting conditions.
2. Factors of inconsistent tillage depths cause consistent planting depth.
3. Through close examination of aerial imagery and interview growers, many of these inconsistencies were caused by any of the following.
4. Tillage speed – too slow or too fast
5. Tillage implements are not level across the main frame and wings.
6. Rolling baskets depth not set correctly.
7. Previous crop residue management.

All the items above have led to stressors put onto corn plants that were observed in uneven emergence, leading to uneven pollination and, most notably, an uneven ear set. Conservatively, some of these stressors may decrease yield by 10-15 bu/acre. Also, growers might observe stressors in their crop this time of year: stalk cannibalization, often due to poor plant health, or mismanagement of soil fertility.

Many corn fields in the area are simply running out of applied Nitro-



gen. Other stressors may be observed in the corn ears. Anything less than a fully developed and pollinated corn ear often indi-

cates some stress. These stressors may include any of the following:

1. Timing issues with pesticide applications
2. Nutrient Deficiencies
3. Excessive air temperatures during daytime and/or nighttime
4. Drought
5. Disease or Ear Rots
6. Insect – Corn Leaf Aphids on certain hybrids x planting date severely impacted pollination this year

All these items may lead to a reduction in overall yield. If any of these items are detected in growers' fields, appropriate considerations should be made to harvest, on-farm grain storage, and develop management strategies for 2025. Ohio State University Extension has a great Tech Sheet that discusses “Abnormal Corn Ears” and can easily be found by following this link for a free copy: {<https://u.osu.edu/mastercorn/abnormal-ears-poster/>}.



Detecting individual stressors in soybeans becomes more difficult due to the growth habits of the soybean varieties grown in EC IL. The type of soybeans we grow is indeterminate growth, which means soybeans' overall growth habits are driven by temperature and photoperiods.

Unlike corn, corn ears are determined at the early vegetative stage around V5-V6. However, we can still determine stressors that may have occurred early in the growing season around planting that may be traced back to compaction, nutrient deficiencies, and even early-season seedling diseases. To identify these stressors, the main taproot and fine root hairs will need to be closely examined, along with observing the main stem at the soil line and even the main stem to see if anything interfered with the natural flow of water and plant nutrients.



Cover Crop Program

Illini FS is now into year three of hosting a “turnkey” custom seed cover crop program focusing on cereal rye following corn and ahead of planting soybeans next year in 2025.

If growers are interested in how Illini FS’s Cover Crop Program might benefit their operation, please follow the QR code below or contact Drew Hewitt at 217-751-2751. Illini FS’s Crop Program consists of:

- Timely seeding of cereal rye ahead of soybeans by Illini FS.
- Recommendations for termination of cover crops
- Recommendation for planting in the next crop year.



**COVER
CROP
PROGRAM**



Energy Update from Chris Olson – Energy Department Manager

Here is a quick look at recent energy market movement:

Crude and diesel continue to cut into recent weeks gains, while gasoline fell to one-week lows as elevated tension in the Middle East seems to have subsided as retaliation plans against Israel by Iran have yet to materialize.

If ceasefire discussion is once again initiated between Hamas and Israel, we could see the rest of the built-up risk premium from last week drop out of markets as chances of retaliation would decrease further.

Also aiding the drop in energy markets are weekly EIA numbers that unexpectedly showed a build in crude inventories versus a reported draw of more than 5 million barrels by the API.

OPEC officials scaled back oil consumption growth for rest of 2024, while IEA representatives adjusted demand down for 2025 as both organizations alluded to weaker than expect economics out of China as the main factor.

US crude oil production has increased to 13.4 million barrels a day, which is a record and will help offset any OPEC reduction in production.

Current pricing still is considerably lower than the fall futures. If you haven’t filled your storage you may want to consider doing so this month.