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Hello All,

With roughly 60-80 days before we kick off the 2016 growing season, I thought I would touch base and fill you in on what's happening in the current crop protection world. Most of these recommendations are from our experience over the years we have farmed along with what we learned from last year's growing season. The good news from a crop protection pricing standpoint is that prices are mostly flat. There are no real significant increases and in some instances, on certain products, prices are down.

A big question we get every week is, "Where can I cut corners to save money with \$3.50 corn?" The simple fact of the matter is I don't believe there are corners to cut, but we can be more knowledgeable of the products we use. For instance, right now we are at an all-time low in rootworm numbers. We will be able to use products like Capture LFR and its generic form of Bifenthrin instead of full rates of Aztec or Force. By doing this we can save an extra \$10-\$15 an acre. It may be possible to be fully protected without the use of dry or liquid insecticide, so stay in contact with your seed salesman and know exactly what hybrids and traits you are using on your farm. Be well aware of the name brand products you are buying as they may be easily and economically paired with another product to offer a nice rebate at the end of the year. Last but not least, there are a lot of great generic products out there that are priced very competitively and offer outstanding performance. Remember, this is the year we need to make our banker happy, not the local sales rep. Stop by or call anytime, and I will be glad to discuss what works best for your operation. I'm sure we can save you dollars and not cut corners.

Recommendations for this upcoming year are consistent with what we always recommend - a good pre-plant herbicide, followed by a solid post spray, and then a fungicide/insecticide pass. For corn pre's we recommend Balance Flexx, Outlook, or Volley ATZ NXT. All are good solid performers and economically priced. For post applications, we like Impact or Capreno on non-gmo acres and a Roundup tank mixed with Status and Atrazine on Roundup Ready acres.

With the growing pressure of waterhemp, I recommend a pre plant on all soybean acres. Some of our growers are having success with just spraying Roundup, but they are very familiar with their farms, scout diligently, and are willing to make an extra pass necessary. We have had good luck with Envive, Authority Maxx, Valor XLT, and Optill. I do believe Envive and Authority Maxx have been the most consistent. For post spray we recommend no less than 32oz of Roundup Powermax tank mixed with Cadet for added knock down of waterhemp and lambsquarter. I truly believe we need to be spraying our beans at an earlier stage. We are seeing

complete control of waterhemp when its 2-4 inches tall, but only 50% control once these same plants get 10 inches tall. When you see small weeds, spray! If you have to make an extra trip later on it will be well worth it. (Note: As of 2-2-16 Monsanto received Chinese approval of Xtend (dicamba) soybeans. I know there will be limited availability of seed for the 2016 season. If you have a farm with waterhemp pressure this may be an option pending EPA approval of post dicamba application.)

For years I had not been a big promoter of a fungicide application. I think our biggest problem back then was poor timing and a general consensus that fungicide was going to give us an extra 30 bushel of corn and 12 bushels of beans. I think our timing is now more precise and spraying corn at early R2 (browning silks) and spraying beans at R3 is giving us consistent successful results. We are especially seeing a good response on beans with adding 1/2-1 gallon of slow release nitrogen. For us it's been a profitable application by enhancing our plant health and standability which in turn gives us higher yields and less crop loss at harvest. My top four picks for fungicide application this year are Fortix, Headline Amp, Quilt Xcel and Bumper. Fortix by far will give us the most residual, and Headline Amp and Quilt Xcel are always solid performers. Bumper is one we should all consider, especially with current commodities prices. It's a propiconazole, which is older chemistry, but we have had fantastic successes using it the last three years, and its pricing, at a 1/3 of the price of other fungicides, makes it a very economical option.

The 2015 growing year highlighted the need to control our weeds early, especially in the beans. This means running a good solid preplant. Sometimes in cool wet conditions, like last year, we saw some pre plant herbicides ding or slow the beans down. In all instances the beans grew out of it. Where we had problems was when we were trying to control weeds with a rescue treatment where preplant wasn't used. In most of these cases Cobra was sprayed when the beans were in a reproductive stage. This dings the beans terribly with no time to recover lost blooms, resulting in lower yields. So spray hard early and avoid herbicide applications after bloom. Another lesson learned was application of late season nitrogen with Y-drop. Up until last year we had no good way of applying late season nitrogen and in some cases "rescue nitrogen". Flown on urea and dribbled UAN have been very inconsistent. Y-drop worked every time even in a rescue situation. I'll have more on Y-drop in our Gripp Farm Nutrients mailer.

I wish everyone high yields and higher prices for the 2016 crop. Until then, feel free to call our stop by. We're always glad to help.

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