

Another Good Pennsylvania Corn Crop Forecast in 1971

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low leaf blight was a serious problem last year

—Keep plant density down. High density results in more moisture in the field. Blight thrives on moist conditions. "Even if the farmer knows his land is capable of growing high densities, he should consider backing off a little in 1971 as protection against blight until more resistant seed is developed."

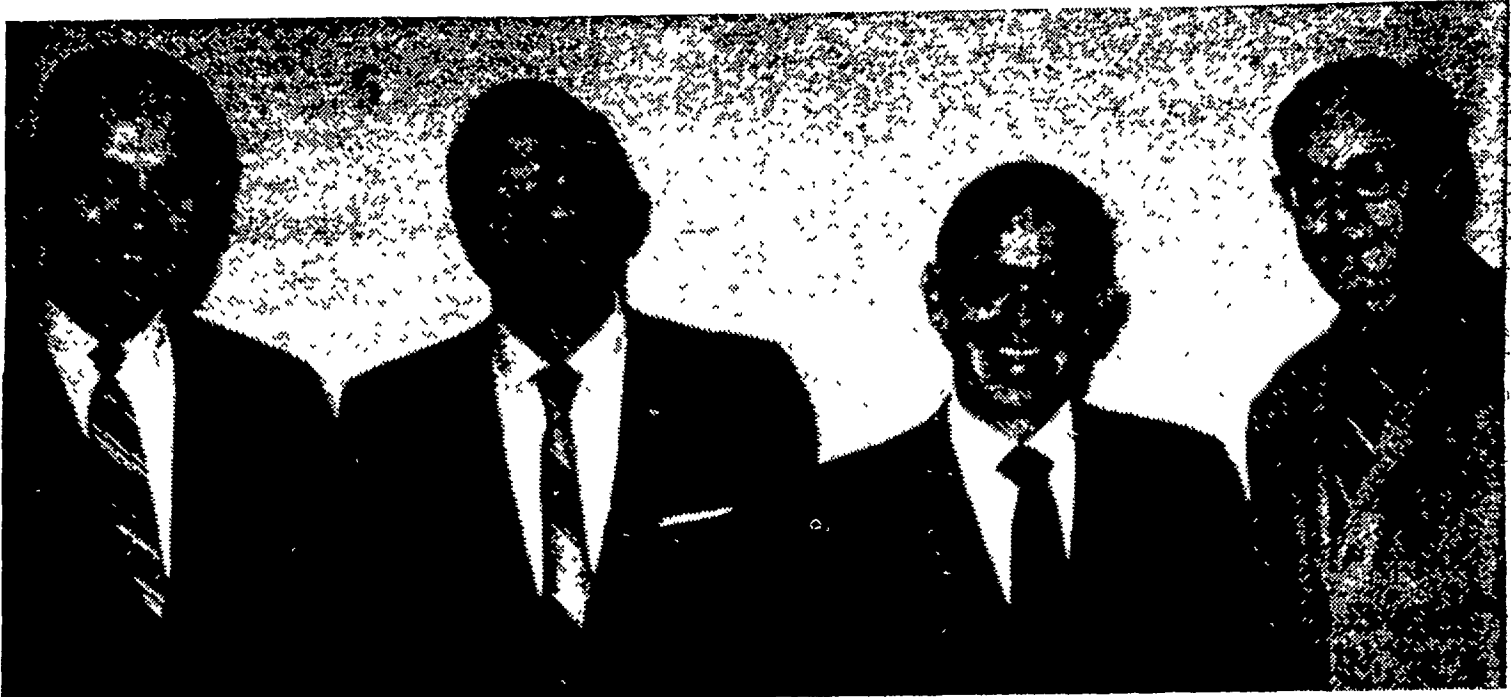
—Spraying. Though not now a solution, a spray is being developed that would hold off blight a few days. This could be economical if blight strikes at the critical stage of maturity.

—Select hybrids that performed well in 1970.

Avoid Humidity

—If the corn field is in a river bottom or fog area, make sure the seed showed a good performance and tolerance to blight in 1970.

The officials reported "a dramatic difference" in blight damage based on location. On



Speakers at the corn meeting at the Farm and Home Center Wednesday night included these men: left to right, John Weidman of the American Seed Trade

Association; Joe H. McGahan, extension agronomist; Dr. Don Petersen, extension plant pathologist, and Dr. Robert Tetrault, extension entomologist.

the Juniata River and Route 322, they found corn was very heavily blighted along the river, but not along the road. The only difference was in humidity.

"Whenever officials wanted to find blight this year," Petersen said, "they went along a stream, where high moisture and humidity helped encourage heavy blight. While moisture and humidity generally help grow good corn, this year it helped also to encourage blight."

"Wherever there was good drainage this year, there was little blight," Petersen said.

What Is Southern Blight?

The Penn State officials also gave a detailed explanation of how the Southern corn blight developed.

Petersen explained that Southern leaf blight attacks only corn with the Texas male sterile cytoplasm (TMS). "Not all corn varieties contain Texas male

cytoplasm — just most all of them," Petersen said.

What is TMS?

In breeding corn, Petersen explained, the female tassel needed to be removed to get the desired pollination. But detasseling required huge amounts of labor, it was costly, and the time of the tasseling was unpredictable, often occurring on Sunday and rainy days. This compelled seed firms to develop some varieties which did not have the

female pollen and tasseling was no problem. These new non-pollen varieties were the Texas male sterile varieties.

Although the new TMS corn seemed identical to other corn, there was an Achilles Heel, a weak link; they turned out to be susceptible to blight.

Petersen also thinks corn breeders, in turning to a heavy reliance on single cross corn, got good results in the form of (Continued on Page 9)

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