

Grain Sorghum Being Researched Locally

Grain sorghum is receiving increasing attention from farmers as a possible substitute for corn and this trend toward grain sorghum is reflected at the Penn State research farm at Landisville.

About one acre of grain sorghum is being grown at the farm this year, the first time sorghum has been tried on the farm, according to John Yocum, farm manager.

Yocum noted that with the wet weather this year, the sorghum had some difficulty getting through the crust on the ground. But it's expected that there will be a sufficient crop this year to give an indication of what can be done with sorghum.

Primary purpose of the work begun at the farm on sorghum is to establish bird resistant varieties.

Yocum reports that birds are an increasing problem on many types of farm crops. While the problem is general, it is particularly severe in certain locations particularly in some sections along the Susquehanna River and around lakes.

He noted that in these areas birds cause 100 per cent losses of some corn crops. It's in areas such as these that bird resistant sorghums can play an important role, he said.

Sorghums are also recommended in shallow soils, such as in some areas of Berks County.

Sorghums also will thrive in much dryer conditions than corn. This makes sorghum a good hedge against drought. This hedge becomes much more

important in shallow or dry soil. Yocum noted that he helped harvest sorghum at Hershey and found the yields to be comparable with corn. He said he understands the value of sorghum is also comparable. He noted that a combine can



John Yocum is shown checking wheat last year at the Landisville research farm.



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be used to harvest grain sorghum. Farmers will probably have to dry the sorghum, he said.

Unless the farmer is going to use the sorghum himself, however, he should make sure in advance that he has a market. There's not a strong market in the East for sorghum, Yocum said.

He emphasized that sorghums will not compare favorably with corn as a silage. "Nothing will compete with corn in TDN per acre, although some other crops will produce comparable dry matter."

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District Field Day July 27

The Lancaster County Soil and Water Conservation District annual field day will be held July 27.

It will be held at the Roy Book dairy farm on Route 896 just south of the Guensey barn on Route 30.

The event will feature land judging, tractor driving and plowing contests.

Rain date is July 29.

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