

Soybeans Hold Firm in Face of Corn Price Drop

With soybean prices holding firm, while corn prices are dropping sharply, maybe local farmers ought to take a harder look at soybeans as a crop next year.

Soybeans as a potential were discussed this week at the Penn State University research farm at Landisville.

John Yocum, Penn State agronomist and farm superintendent, said it's still too early to tell just how well beans will do on the farm. But he's optimistic now, just before harvest, that the beans will yield 40 bushels per acre. Yocum is also keeping an eye on some neighboring farms where local farmers planted several acres of soybeans.

Last year, with the small corn crop that sent corn prices shooting up to the \$1.50 to \$1.75 or more a bushel level, soybeans didn't appear nearly as attractive as a crop as they do now.

With corn moving closer to \$1 a bushel, soybeans at recent \$3 a bushel prices look much better.

A 40 bushel soybean yield at \$3 would gross the farmer as much as 120 bushels of corn at \$1.

While the relative value of soybeans and corn could change dramatically next year—particularly if more farmers turn more acres to soybeans—the future of soybeans looks good now.

Yocum explained that there's many uses for the beans, both in industrial and food manufacturing, as well as in livestock and poultry feed. A very high per-

centage of the national soybean production is exported.

Farmers are primarily interested in soybeans because of their extremely high protein content, as much 40 per cent or more protein.

Yocum explained that while soybeans have a ready market, most local farmers interested in them are looking at the feed value with a view to fitting soybeans into the livestock ration.

Ruminant animals can use soybeans without cooking, if urea is not used. If urea is included, however, the beans must be cooked, Yocum said.

Non-ruminant animals also require cooked beans. The cooking or heating is necessary to kill enzymes in the beans.

Raw soybeans, according to Dr. Richard Cole, Penn State agronomist, can be safely used in cattle feed at the rate of up to 20 to 25 per cent of the total ration.

As a forage crop, the agronomists feel soybeans, because of their high protein content, could be used in combination with either corn or sorghum.

The crop might also make acceptable silage if the stem could be cracked, it was reported at the meeting.

In a talk before area farmers earlier this year, Yocum said the first thing to consider about any new crop is: can it make you a profit?

His second question concerning soybeans or any other new crop was: how much more is it worth

to you if you feed it rather than sell it as a cash crop?

Yocum feels soybeans can definitely be raised in the Lancaster County area, if the farmer feels it will result in reduced feed costs.

Dr. Cole told farmers attending the field meeting "If we ever get into the soybean business in this state, I think it's important that we also get into the seed business."

He stressed the need for high quality seed only when planting soybeans and told the farmers they could use their own seed if it was good and has first been tested for germination.

Beans on the Penn State farm were planted in 30 inch rows, 10 beans to a foot and figuring an 80 per cent emergence rate.

When planting soybeans, Dr.

Cole said, forget about pounds per acre and figure in terms of how many beans the planter is dropping and the emergence of the seed.

The soybeans were planted about 1-1/2 inches deep with a herbicide applied prior to planting.

In plots planted to simulate soybeans going in after barley rows were spaced 15 inches apart.

Problems encountered in the soybean trials included the Japanese beetle, which loves the soybean plant, nutsedge and quackgrass.

Yocum noted that while the soybean plots did not receive fertilizer, the soil had first been tested and found to contain a high level nearly everything needed.

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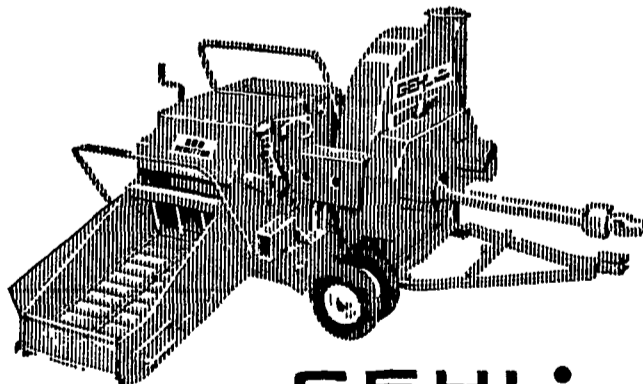
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