

Berks County corn growers warm up for spring

BY LAUREL SCHAEFFER
Staff Correspondent

LEESPORT — Eager to update their knowledge on corn and soybean management, over 100 Berks County farmers gathered at the Agricultural Center here, January 15th, for a special meeting devoted to these crops.

John Yocum, director South East Research Farm of Penn State University, discussed soybeans as a cash crop and their weed control. Discussing several aspects of growing corn was Joe McGahen, Extension Agronomy Specialist, Penn State University.

Also presented during the day long affair was a discussion on hedging crops, by Clarke Hess of Merrill Lynch; and a talk on the recirculating sprayer, presented by Guy Braxton of Monsanto.

The local farmers also heard a panel of Ag Industry Experts discuss what they thought to be the most serious production problems of 1979. But highlighting the entire program was the presentation of awards by senior County Agent Jim Haldeman to Berks County's Corn Growers Club.

Burd Schantz, Alburtis, had the highest yield of 158.1

bushels per acre and a three year average of 157.3 bushels per acre.

David Herbert, Fleetwood, followed with a yield of 156.3 bushels per acre. With a yield of 144.1 bushels was David Schantz, Alburtis.

David had the highest three-year average of 160.8 bushels per acre. John Stump, Bernville, produced 143 bushels per acre last year and had a three year average of 144.3 bushels per acre.

Discussing corn management, McGahen told the area farmers that there would have to be new breakthroughs in the science of plant breeding to achieve more than 140 to 150 bushels per acre on a whole average for farmers. To push yields higher, you have to look at the economics first, he warned.

"Why produce higher yields if it doesn't pay?"

Soil drainage is the most important factor in selecting a tillage method, the agronomist told his audience. Poorly drained soils can be improved by tillage rather than no-tilling. If planting is delayed, however, the tillage method wouldn't matter, he continued.

In well drained soils with

low organic matter a cover crop was advised for no-tilling to achieve a consistency of performance. Cover crops help to keep moisture in the soil and reduce run-off.

Studies show no-till is equal to or better than tillage following sod. In poorly drained soils, however, there was a noticeable reduction in yields in continuously no-tilled corn, but when plowed one year and no-tilled the next, there was no yield reduction.

During the segment devoted to soybeans, the area farmers learned that weed control in this crop is more difficult than for corn.

"There is more potential to injure the bean," Yocum stated. You have to be a little better manager to be successful, he warned.

Yocum cautioned the growers on several factors which should be considered when growing beans. These included knowing the weeds and chemicals needed to control them. When dealing with perennials, Yocum also warned the farmers about knowing the growth stages of the weeds and in which stage they are easiest to kill.

Knowing the soil texture and organic matter content of the fields was also stressed by the research scientist. The higher the organic matter of a soil the higher the rate of herbicides should be used.

Seed placement during planting was also stressed. Yocum told his audience the corn planter does a much more uniform job of seed placement than the grain drill. The speaker warned the farmers to use their agronomy guides and to follow the advice given for successful soybean production.

Hess told farmers hedging is an alternative marketing plan for their crops and stressed it is not a cure all or for everybody. However, a true hedge is like an insurance policy, but too often hedges become speculators.

Guy Braxton introduced the recirculating sprayer used for weed problems in growing crops with the use of



Jim Haldeman, county agent presented corn club awards to David Herbert, Fleetwood; David Schantz, Alburtis; and John Stump, Bernville.

a slide presentation.

This sprayer is effective in such problems as volunteer

corn in soybeans. The

sprayer projects a stream of herbicide over the crop and

is caught and recirculated

again. It only contacts plants taller than the standing crop.

Stauffer named as co-chairman

Barbara Stauffer, Ephrata R1, has been named as co-chairman of the ladies program for the 1981 National Young Farmer Institute to be held in Hershey, December 5-9, 1981. She will serve with Carol Homan, Spring Mills, R1, it was announced by the executive committee of the National Young Farmer Institute.

Barbara's husband, Earl, is regional vice president of the Pennsylvania Young Farmers, and Carol's husband, Bill, is the 1979 state president.

Both women are very active in community and agricultural-related events. Barbara said the women will be helping to arrange tours for the 1500-2000 people expected to attend the conference, along with arranging special activities for the women. There will be two days of farm tours and agri-business tours.

Chairman for the women's portion of the program is LaVaughne Wolf, Orrtanna R1, whose husband Stanley has been elected chairman of the 1981 National Institute.

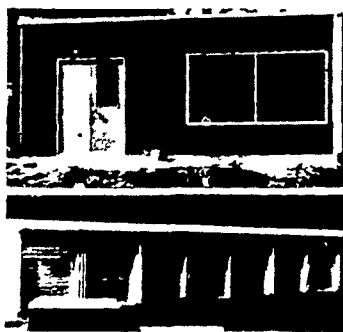


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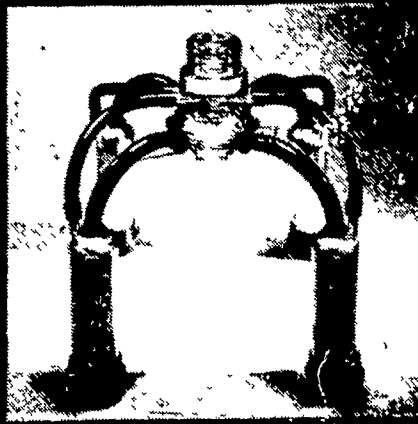
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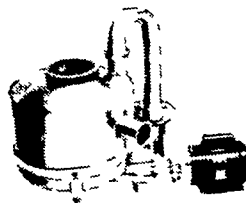
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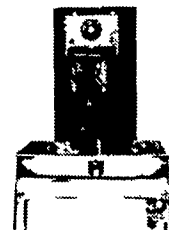


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