

Weed scientist questions dinoseb effect on corn

GEORGETOWN, Del. — Several years ago the growth stimulant dinoseb received a lot of publicity as a possible way to boost corn yields. A number of Delaware farmers even paid to have the compound applied by air to their fields.

University of Delaware weed scientist David Regehr was concerned about the inconsistency of reports coming out of the Midwest at that time (1977) on the effects of this chemical on yields.

He also wanted to see whether environmental factors such as water stress might influence the performance of corn treated with the growth stimulant. So he initiated a three-year

study of dinoseb at the University's Agricultural Experiment station. His report on that study was recently completed.

During the 1977, 1978, and 1979 growing seasons, the weed scientist compared the effects of dinoseb applied at the rate of one-fifth ounce per acre on several full-season corn hybrids—growth with and without irrigation.

The overall result was an average 66 percent yield increase due to irrigation. Treatment with dinoseb had no significant effect on yields in 1977.

In 1978 and 1979, grain yields in dinoseb treated plots were reduced an average of 18 percent.

Only in one of the three years was there any notable difference between irrigated and unirrigated plots in their response to dinoseb. In that case, the result was more yield reduction in irrigated corn than in dry corn.

Regehr noted a strong trend toward reduced ear fill in both irrigated and dry corn treated with dinoseb. A comparison of grain yield with total above-the-ground plant weight suggested that the growth stimulant somehow interfered with the plant's reproductive system.

Commenting on these results, the scientist says growers should be cautious about jumping on the bandwagon for every new product that comes along—especially materials that haven't been subjected to rigorous and repeated field trials under a variety of growing conditions.

In his own study, Regehr used six replications each of the three years involved. This means the study was similar to running one comparison a year for 18 years, or to 18 different farmers doing the same test in the same year.

"Don't throw a product

out, and don't accept it, simply on the basis of a single trial or someone's testimonial," advises Regehr.

"Check with as many people as possible to see what results they're getting. This helps you reduce the element of chance in the response that you see in your own field."

Before deciding whether or not to invest in a new product in the hopes that it will increase yields, it's also a good idea to see how your observations compare with reported research on the product.

According to Donald F. Crossan, dean of the University of Delaware College of Agricultural Delaware Agricultural Sciences and director of the Experiment Station, every new product deserves this kind of thorough evaluation under Delaware growing conditions.

Unfortunately, state and federal monies are not always adequate to the task and we must rely on private sources to extend these vital efforts on the farmers' behalf.

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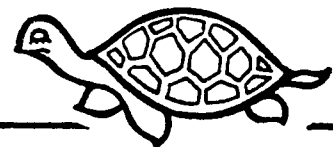
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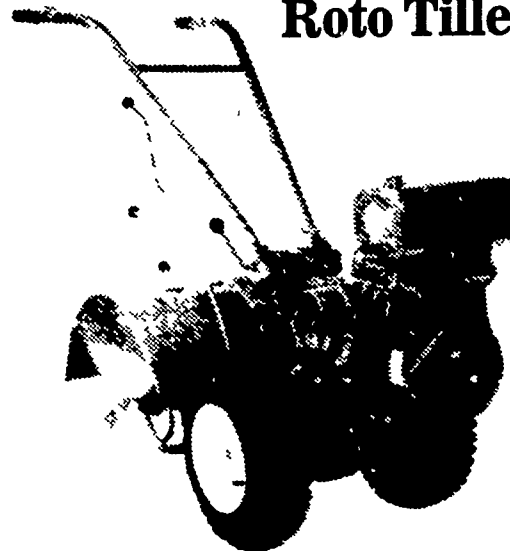
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