

Beans vs. corn

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or nearly equal to the highs of the 60's.

More and more of the very light sandy ground used for growing corn in lower Delaware is coming under irrigation. It's hard to know to what extent this trend is responsible for boosting corn yields. But it's obviously not the whole answer.

The increase in average annual yield started before much of this crop was irrigated. When a sandy field that's a clear drought hazard is irrigated for corn production, a farmer benefits two ways because at the same time that he does away with water stress, he can take advantage of new production practices proven to enhance yield.

Agronomists don't have that kind of handle on soybean yields yet, unfortunately. Yet yields need to go up in order to keep pace with inflation, says German.

If costs continue to increase at the rate of about 10 percent per year, a corn farmer needs to increase his yield by seven to eight bushels per acre depending on price, just to stay even. For soybeans he needs between a two to three bushel increase, depending on price.

Increasing a corn yield by that much is entirely within the realm of possibility.

But what about soybeans? Why aren't their yields keeping pace, too? asks Mitchell

Is it because of the increasing trend toward double cropping? Is it a lack of outstanding varieties? And to what extent is water limiting Delmarva soybean yields?

Some people say that soybeans don't respond as well to irrigation as corn does. If your yield goal is only 50 bushels and your dry land

yield is already 35, maybe that isn't such a big deal. But if you can get up to 75 to 80 bushels an acre, like a researcher at Rutgers University did last summer under irrigation, how much of that increase is due to better water management?

"We need to go back to the drawing board and carefully work this yield problem through on soybeans," says Mitchell. "The answer won't come overnight, or in a single growing season."

Double cropping, limiting water, and limited varietal choices are the three factors he thinks may be most responsible for holding down soybean yields - not fertilizer.

"There's no evidence that soybean yields will be boosted by dumping on a lot of fertilizer," he says, "though high yields are associated with high fertility soil."

By high fertility he means soil that's high in organic matter, has good aeration and other structural properties that affect performance - as well as adequate nutrients.

As soybean yields improve, this crop will need additional fertilizer, too. A way to administer this directly to soybeans may be found, but right now it seems just as effective to fertilize corn land extra well and let soybeans use the residual nutrients the following year, says Mitchell.

Without good soil and well-managed fertility, you can't get good yields.

The soybean plant's poor track record in Delaware over the past 20 years is a clear challenge for the self-help program soybean producers have undertaken through their new check-off system, says Mitchell. There's an obvious need for some good production research on this crop.

Mushrooms make Pennsylvania number one

HARRISBURG — What nutritious, delicious delicacy ranks Pennsylvania number one in the nation? It's not a fruit, it's not a vegetable...nor is it a poultry or livestock product. It's the mushroom, Pennsylvania's March commodity of the month.

Pennsylvania produces nearly one-half of the nation's mushrooms, making us the mushroom capital of the world. Mushrooms are grown mainly in southeast and western Pennsylvania.

The Food and Nutrition Division of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture suggests mushrooms deserve a place in every family's meal plans, whether as a garnish or as a main dish.

As a low calorie treat, nibbling raw mushrooms can't be beat. They can enhance the simplest of foods, and are a great addition to omelets and salads. Of course, mushrooms are a welcome accompaniment to any meal.

One pound of mushrooms con-

tains only 90 calories. They are an excellent source of the B-complex vitamins which help the body convert energy. Mushrooms are also a very good source of Vitamin C and K. Their protein content exceeds most vegetables.

Whether eaten raw or served as a course in themselves, mushrooms are a delicacy.

The secret to preserving that delicacy from the market to the table starts with selection: choose only clean, white mushrooms. They should be from 3/4 inch to three inches in diameter. Avoid mushrooms with brown or black gills, which indicate age.

Keep your mushrooms in a brown bag. Mushrooms are grown in the dark, and are very sensitive to light.

When preparing mushrooms for cooking, keep them in cold water. Trim the base of the stem and clean each mushroom carefully.

When cleaned, use them immediately.

This month's Pennsylvania Commodity recipe:

CRISP GOLDEN MUSHROOMS
1/2 lb small fresh mushrooms or 1 can (6 to 8 oz) whole mushrooms

1/3 cup cornflake crumbs

1/2 tsp. Italian seasoning

1/4 tsp. salt

dash ground red pepper, if desired

1/4 cup light cream or half & half

Rinse, pat dry and trim fresh mushrooms or drain canned mushrooms; set aside. In a small paper or plastic bag combine cornflake crumbs, Italian seasoning, salt and red pepper. Dip mushrooms into cream and then shake in bag with seasoned cornflake crumbs. Place on a cookie sheet. Bake in a preheated moderate oven (350°F.) for 15 minutes. Serve as hors d'oeuvres or main dish accompaniment. Yield: about 18 mushrooms.

Smith to be honored

LANCASTER — Tickets are now available for a dinner honoring County Extension Agent M.M. Smith, who is retiring on March 28 after 44 years of service in Lancaster County.

The program will be held Sunday, March 28, beginning with a buffet dinner at 1.00 p.m. in the auditorium of the Lancaster Bible

College, 901 Eden Road, Lancaster. Following the meal a program recognizing Smith's achievements will be held.

Tickets are available at \$10 per person, and reservations can be made by calling Anne Bowman at 569-6680 or Jay Irwin, 394-6851.

The dinner and program are open to the public. Ticket deadline is March 20.

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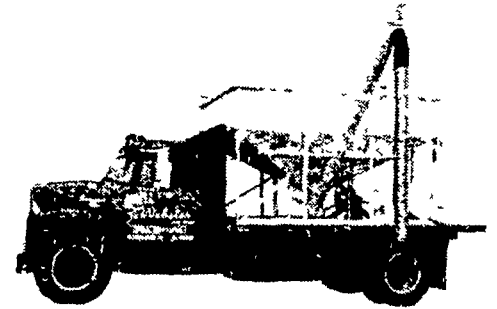
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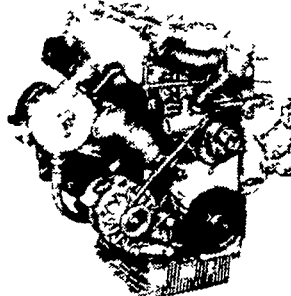
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