



Brockett's Ag Advice

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Why are some farmers able to make more profit than others in similar circumstances? I suppose the answer is the same as why one man can hit more home runs in a year than anyone else? Or why does one college football hero command millions of dollars for his services while others fade into oblivion? Some people just have a greater talent than others in a given area.

However that is not the only reason nor is it a true answer. There is more to it than sheer talent. The best is also the most dedicated, have more desire to succeed, the best at decision making and the one most apt to study ways to constantly improve. This is a factor in any area of life. No dedication, hard work, and desire do not take the place of

talent but it can bring that talent to the nth degree.

As examples look at some ball players from the past - Eddie Stanky, Leo Durocher, Pee Wee Reese. They were mediocre in relation to some of their team mates. If all scientific factors were applied to them they would never had made a high school team, let alone be a major leaguer. Yet dedication, desire, and work did magnify their talent into star quality.

Let's look at some of the factors that help make a top crop producer good.

1. Soil quality - there is no question that soil quality is important. It is easier and cheaper to

produce high yields on Hagerstown silt loam than on Edom soil. Yet some farmers were able to overcome low quality soils with soil improvement techniques such as drainage, contours, good liming, and good cultural practices.

2. High yields - this has been one of the more surprising factors as I have been reviewing my enterprise analyses. Some farmers with quite high yields also had very high expenses. Their returns were not what may have been expected. The top operators appeared to have been able to strike a balance between costs and returns. One of the most variable items was cash machine costs. Apparently some farmers can operate equipment more efficiently than others. This is not real surprising since an energy survey I did a few years ago indicated the same thing.

3. Crop records - many but not all

good crop producers keep crop records. None of those at the other end of the spectrum kept crop records.

4. Careful cost control - in practically every case the top crop money makers had average or better yields on all crops and average or below expenses. In addition to the wide fluctuations of machine costs, it was a surprise to see the variation in lime and fertilizer costs per acre. Not knowing all the farms, it was hard to tell whether this fluctuation was

due to a variance in selection of brands, careful shopping for the best price, better use of soil tests, quality of soils or past liming and fertilizing practices.

I do feel that most farmers could do a more efficient job of producing crops if (1) they had more knowledge of soil chemistry and the use of nutrients by plants, (2) used soil test results, (3) set priorities on fields on which to spend the fertilizer dollar, and (4) paid more attention to nutrient balance.



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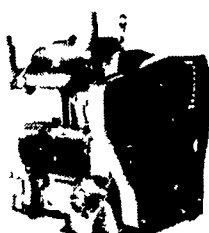
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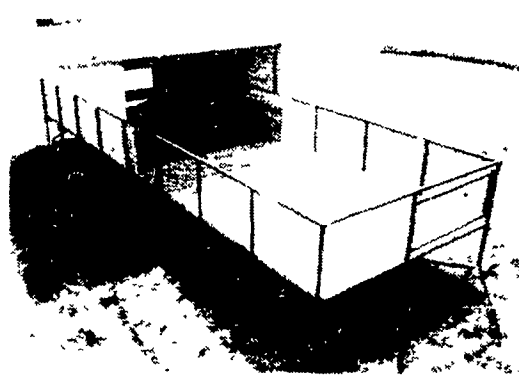
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