

There's much to consider in picking hybrid

Several agronomic and economic factors must be considered prior to selecting your 1985 corn hybrids, according to Larry Martin, DeKalb-Pfizer Genetics regional agronomist.

Yield is the most wanted trait but, depending on individual desires and environmental imposed pressures, it may not be the most important, he said. Yield is the by-product of many agronomic and environmental interactions that must be considered in the selection process.

In selecting a corn hybrid, the ultimate use must be considered. It may be grain for livestock, grain for market, silage, or special market grain for human consumption. Many corn hybrids can

fit all these categories but usually one or two are better adapted. You may also need to select from hybrids with yellow, white, waxy, or high lysine grain for the ultimate use.

To select the best adapted hybrid for your use, begin by reflecting on the hybrids you planted in 1984. Most of these will be available again in 1985. Ask yourself about the plant characteristics of each of these. Were they what you wanted? Did a particular hybrid fulfill your ultimate use needs?

To harvest a high grain yield, strong stalks and roots are essential. If one or both of these characteristics are lacking, many bushels may be left in the field. However, be cautious in blaming

the hybrid for poor standability; insects, environmental conditions, unavailable fertility, and disease may be the actual cause for weak stalks or roots.

If you have damage, evaluate company, university and neighboring farmers' information to determine how performance was over a broader area. Multi-year data should also be examined to determine if damage was the result of environmental pressures, management practices, or genetics.

Your choice of tillage and planting practices may also determine the hybrid you should plant. Conventional tilled soils usually warm up earlier and provide better seed beds than

minimum or no-till fields. Therefore, hybrids with average seedling growth rates may be more forgiving in conventional tilled fields. The colder no-till soils require hybrids that can germinate and establish themselves rapidly if you attempt to reap the benefits of early planting.

If continuous corn is a common practice in your farming operation, disease resistance, insect tolerance, and standability should be evaluated carefully. Disease and insect pressures tend to be more prominent in continuous corn operations.

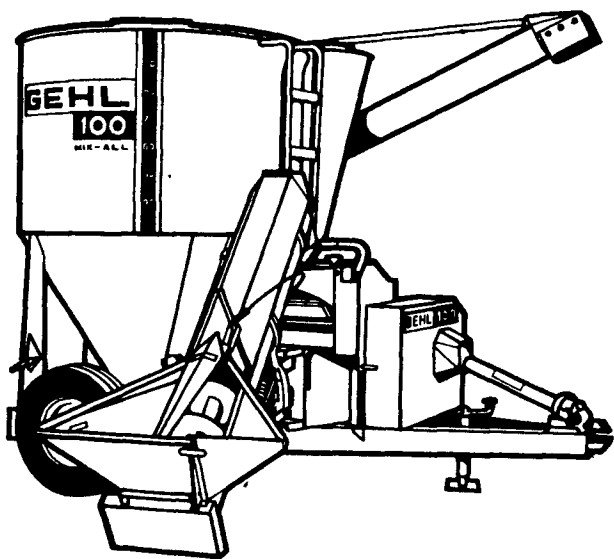
Plant population should be considered also. If your desired harvest population is approximately 21,000 plants per acre or less, hybrids that flex ear size may be more desirable. With harvest populations above 21,000, you may be able to use the same hybrid or others that produce smaller ears but require more plants for optimum yield. Always ask your seed dealer as to the recommended final population of a hybrid.

Economically, plant maturity and the rate of grain moisture loss (dry down) are major concerns. With increasing drying costs, early, fast-drying, high-yielding hybrids are preferred in many operations. On the other hand, selecting hybrids with excellent stalks to allow for larger field drying may also be considered an economical move for some growers.

During the growing season, company hybrid plots (such as the DeKalb-Pfizer Genetics Field Analysis Comparison Trials—FACT) and university trials are excellent for evaluating a number of hybrids under the same growing conditions. These are also valuable for observing desired traits such as height, ear placement, shank length, ear size, tillering tendency, and multiple ear tendency.

Above all, seed quality should be at the top of your selection process. Seed should be high germinating, clean, disease free, and visually pleasant to provide you with the confidence you demand from a seed product.

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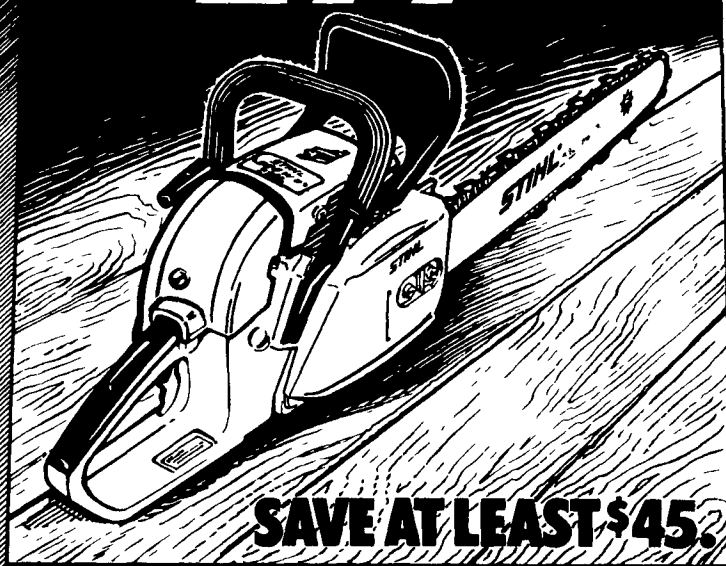
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