

Fertilizing in tough times

By Alton Homan
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TOWANDA - Farmers are taking a serious look at all their crop management practices for 1986. And well they should, with record crop yields, huge carryover supplies, and disaster level prices this fall.

The farm sector of our economy has borne a major burden as a result of national economic policies, as well as international trade policies and surpluses of major farm commodities.

Some keys to farming success may well be 1 fine tuning financial management, 2 top profit yields on all planted acres, and 3 careful use of government programs. In a nutshell, sharp managers will not just cut costs without realizing production and profit may be cut as well. Such items as high quality seed, crop protection materials, and optimum fertilizer rates should be maintained. An across-the-board cut of inputs would lower your individual yields and raise your cost per ton.

Some farmers ask, "I didn't seem to get hurt by fertilizer cutbacks in 1985, can I do it again in 1986?" At this point I'd have to

say, don't push your luck. Timely planting and adequate rain helped make 1985 a good growing season. Yields may have been higher if fertilizer rates were higher. These higher crop yields may have been reduced built up soil fertility enough to drastically reduce yields if fertilizer rates are cut again. Weather may not cooperate as well in 1986. The best guide, of course, is to soil test to determine residual levels, especially if the field is frequently manured.

Another aspect is a similar question such as, "Can I afford much fertilizer with \$2 corn?" My assessment is yes! Grain prices have a less than usually expected effect on optimum fertilizer rates for maximum economic yields. A study shows that the optimum nitrogen rate drops only 9 lbs/acre with 15/lb nitrogen (like anhydrous ammonia), 22 lbs/acre with .30/lb. nitrogen when corn prices drop from \$3 to \$2.

Even if you feel you lost money with \$2 corn, you'll lose less if you shoot for the lowest cost per bushel or ton.

You need to realize that maximum economic yields don't guarantee profitable production

Perhaps it would be better for a dairyman or livestock producer with a low crop production capability or small livestock unit to purchase corn.

Another point of view may be necessary before planting next year, that of your lender if money needs to be borrowed. A smart lender avoids the "we'll give you only \$10,000 for 1986 approach." Progressive lenders will loan whatever it takes to produce crops at the lowest cost per bushel or ton. As a result, you avoid "saving" that last \$1,000 of fertilizer which may cut yields by \$4,000.

But planning the fertility program is a crucial part of a high profit farming operation. Approach it by analyzing 1 soil test level, 2 prior crop removal, 3 soil residual goal, 4 crop production goal.

One question in the past has been, "How do I get my lender to listen?" One way is a good set of accurate records. A request for money to purchase planting needs simply by stating you need money to get your planting done may not suffice. Go to your lender to tell him 1 why you want the money, 2 how you are going to use it, 3 how

and when you're going to pay it back, 4 what you'll do if something goes wrong with the base plan.

If you have been a member of the 5 Acre Corn of the Alfalfa Growers program, you already may have all the proof you need with itemized expenses, yields and profits. Also, if you are a member of a Crop Management Association, records could easily support your request for a loan.

Remember, if the decision has been made to plant in 1986, input

cost cutting could reduce profits or increase losses. Few farmers doubled fertilizer rates when prices went up, so think twice about cutting them in half when prices are down.

Price	Optimum N Rate	
	15N	30N
\$ bu	lbs A	lbs 'A
3 00	187	172
2 50	183	166
2 00	178	154

Seedway unveils Todd 7800

HALL, NY - Seedway, Inc. announces the introduction of Todd 7800, a main season single cross hybrid corn variety, adapted to 116 day or 2600 growing degree day areas, of the northeastern United States. Todd 7800 is a result of the most recent technology in hybrid corn development. The company has evaluated the new hybrid over several growing seasons at several locations, and found the new variety a consistently high yielder with good standability.

Todd 7800 was selected as the comparison hybrid for research strip trials conducted at 12 sites throughout MD, PA, NJ, and NY by Seedway. These large scale machine planted and harvested trials compare new introductions with commercially available industry leaders, and new material not yet released by the company. 7800 was planted at locations appropriate to its maturity. It outyielded all competitive hybrids with yields up to 183 bu./acre and average harvest moisture of 25.7 percent. Stalk breakage averaged less than 4 percent at sites in Fruitland, MD, Ridgely, MD, and

Buckingham, PA.

Introductory quantities of seed were available to Seedway dealers during the past growing season, where it was planted in 10 dealer corn demonstration plots. 7800 averaged 164.2 in bu./acre over the ten sites. Good standability and consistently high yields recommend it to northeast corn growers.

For more information, contact the company at 717-966-3841 or 717-764-9814.



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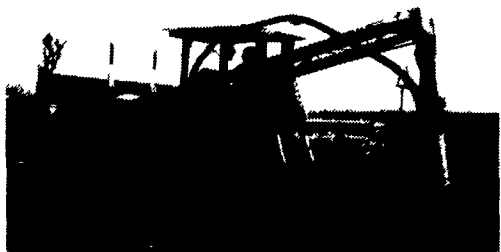
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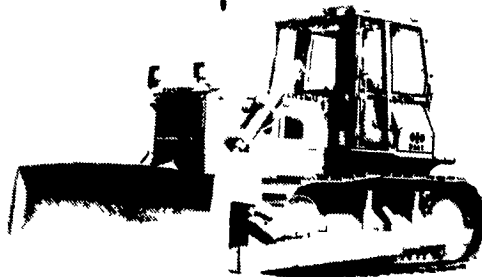
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