

Plan Now For '87 Planting Season

DEKALB, Ill. — It's hard to believe that farmers will be planting their 1987 crops in a few months. Now is the time for farmers to review their notes and observations from this past year to begin planning for next year's crop, says Bob Streit, regional agronomist for Dekalb-Pfizer Genetics.

Tillage

"If a piece of worn-out equipment must be replaced, now may be the time to switch to reduced tillage," says the agronomist. "Much of the projected savings in reduced tillage occurs from lower equipment inventory and equipment costs."

Last year's alfalfa set-aside acres that will be planted to corn next year will provide the perfect base for trying slot planting, Streit suggests. Or, that new herbicide program you've worked up, coupled with the availability of a high trash soybean drill, appear to make no-tilling a field of soybeans feasible and profitable.

Fertility

Since fertilizer is one of the major crop costs, Streit says, it is

important that each grower get the maximum return from each dollar spent. "Adequate phosphate and potash levels are needed to produce profitable crops. The only way to determine if each field has proper levels is by maintaining a current set of soil test records," he advises.

The agronomist states that if your corn field turned yellow due to lack of nitrogen in mid-summer, it would be beneficial to consider a different nitrogen management program. "Split applications of nitrogen or a switch to less soluble forms of N could make a difference in profitability for the 1987 corn crop." Now is the time to check into the equipment it would take to switch to split application and shop for the cheapest and best form of N to use next spring, he adds.

Herbicides

Take advantage of winter months to check out new herbicides, says Streit. "Review performance data from several years over a variety of soil types with your supplier. If you're modifying your current program, also look at rates." Rate cutting is

often explored, but remember, the most expensive herbicide program is one that does not control weeds, the DeKalb-Pfizer official cautions. "If you've taken notes from the tractor or the combine during the season, review those notes and treat each field individually, based on the severity of weed infestation." Blanket applications at high herbicide rates are both expensive and inefficient, Streit adds.

Seed

Picking the best corn or soybean variety goes a long way towards getting top yields in 1987. "You'll want to plant your best varieties and eliminate the worst one or two," the agronomist suggests. Replace them with the best new varieties from your seed supplier.

Every new variety should have lots of performance data justifying its release, Streit states. Select varieties based on what has happened over the last three or four years rather than only the most recent year. Weather extremes could sway one year's performance beyond what would normally be expected, he concludes.

Maryland Preserves Record Amount Of Farmland

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — According to the 1986 Annual Report of the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, 1986 has proven to be the most successful year to date in preserving the state's farmland.

"We broke our previous records for both the establishment of new agricultural preservation districts and the acquisition of development rights easements," said Gerald F. Talbert, executive director of the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation. "The acquisition cost per acre, which was already the lowest for any program of its kind in the nation, actually decreased in FY'86 while

other state's program costs increased."

"As most farmers are painfully aware, 1986 was a bad year for Maryland field crops and it was also a bad year for the amount of farmland lost to development pressure," said Maryland Secretary of Agriculture Wayne A. Cawley, Jr. "Fortunately, more farmers than ever before are able to overcome these and other obstacles by the sale of their development rights to the Foundation, sustaining themselves and their families and insuring that more agricultural land will be preserved for the future."

The Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation Program achieved its most productive year in the establishment of new agricultural preservation districts in FY'86 by approving 140 petitions protecting 19,982 acres. As of June 30, 1986, 841 agricultural preservation districts preserving 124,172 acres were enrolled in the program. The FY'86 totals provided a 19-percent increase in the district acreage base. Agricultural preservation districts now exist in 22 of the state's 23 counties.

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