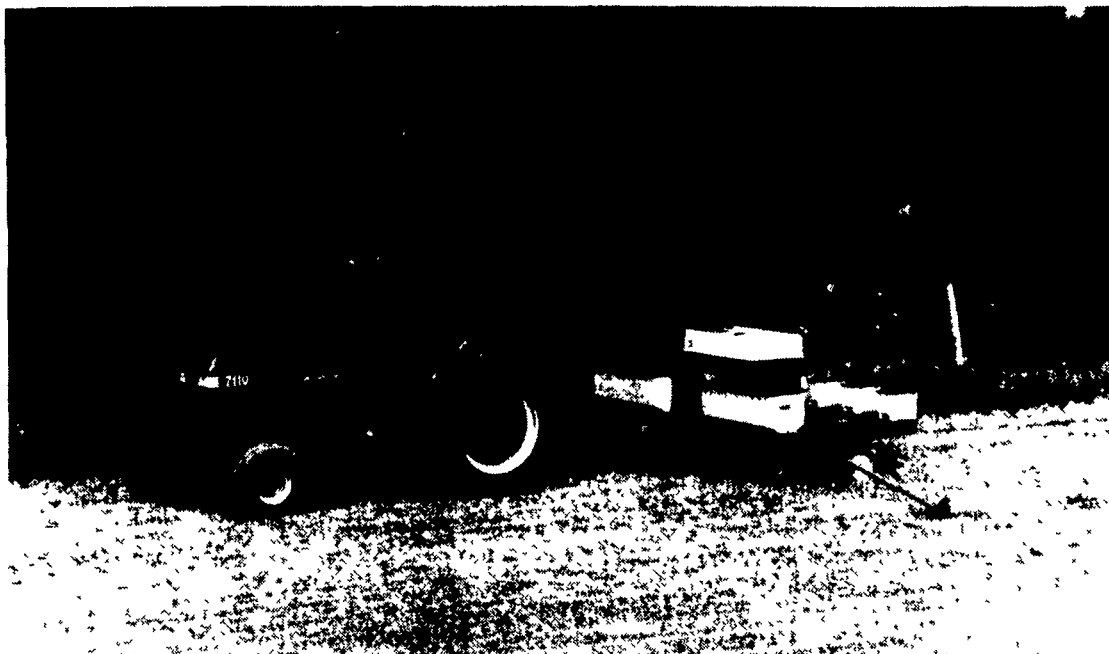


Seed Availability Requires Planting Adjustments



Many farmers this year will be planting seed corn that is smaller than they normally use. Air planters like the one shown can be adjusted easily to match the size of seed to be planted.

RACINE, WISC. — As corn growers plan for the upcoming planting season, they should be aware that seed availability will likely require changes in usual planting procedures. The 1988 drought and other factors have affected both the size and quantity of seed corn for 1989 crops.

For most farmers, this means the seed sizes they normally plant may not be available, or they can only be obtained at a higher cost. This does not have to be a major problem, however, if growers plan ahead and make sure the equipment they have will handle the seed they order.

This year, a larger percentage of higher-performing hybrid seed will be available in smaller sizes. One reason is that farmers have passed over some hybrids in recent years because they were only available in smaller sizes. These carryover supplies and the drought-stunted 1988 crop make it more likely that seed for 1989 planting will be smaller.

Size doesn't affect performance

Although many farmers have become accustomed to planting only medium flats, they may be limiting their options by keeping

with tradition. Research by universities and seed companies has shown that seed corn size does not affect yields or emergence. "Since large and small kernels of the same hybrid are identical genetically, there should be no difference in performance if there is good quality control," according to Dr. Garren Benson, extension agronomist at Iowa State University. Many seed companies offer discounts on smaller seed sizes, providing a cost savings as well.

Proper adjustment is crucial

The planter may be the most important factor in the performance of smaller seed. "Adapting your planter for various seed sizes doesn't have to be expensive or time-consuming," says Joe Neville, Case IH product director for implements. "Most planters, with a few adjustments or some new plates, can do a good job with any size of seed. Of course, normal maintenance is also important."

Careful maintenance will reduce the problems caused by seed size variation. Air planters can be adjusted easily to take into account the size of the seeds to be planted. On the Case IH Cyclo® Air planters, for example, the air

pressure and brush settings should be adjusted to the size of the seeds. On plate planters, seed size should be properly matched with seed plates.

For general maintenance, Neville suggests starting with the metering mechanism. The seed selection mechanism should be examined for worn or broken parts.

On air-type planters:

- Check for damaged or poorly fitting seals that could cause air pressure leaks.
- Clean seed tubes by pulling a cloth through the tube. This rids the tube of foreign material which can create stoppages.

- Inspect the seal around the seed drum and the rubber seed release wheels. Replace if cracked or worn.

- Check seed cutoff brush and brush rollers for wear. Replace with complete assembly if necessary.

On plate-type planters:

- Replace worn or sticky cutoff pawls and knockout rollers. Be sure that the pawls work freely and that the springs are in good condition.

- Check the center bearing for wear. A worn bearing results in excessive play between the seed plate and the sides of the hopper bottoms. This causes variation in the size of the cell.

- Empty the hopper periodically to remove dirt, dust and chaff accumulations which can hamper smooth operation of the hopper parts.

Soybean growers this year may also be faced with shortages of more popular varieties, since the drought reduced yields in many areas of the Midwest. Good quality seed may be in short supply, so soybean growers should order early.

Higher seed prices and reduced supplies of some types of seed will make accuracy more critical than ever this year, but with the proper preparation, growers can be certain their equipment will efficiently plant the seed that is available.

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