

Small Seed Just As Good As Larger Kernels

DEKALB, Ill. — Some seed this season may be smaller than farmers have planted previously. But that is no cause for alarm, says Dick Bohling, manager of agronomics services for DEKALB Plant Genetics.

"University and seed company research results consistently show that small corn seed is equal in value to the medium and larger sizes," he said. "In fact, small seed often delivers greater net return because it normally has a price advantage."

Bohling notes, however, that using smaller seed means farmers will have to adjust and operate their planters a bit different than normal.

"Planter adjustment and operation for small or light weight seed bags requires a little more precision and care, but modern planters, with improved metering devices, can handle any and all seed sizes with success," he said.

The DEKALB agronomist recommends first checking the operator's manual for detailed instructions. Adjustments may be necessary or parts may need to be replaced.

For example, with a Case IH air planter, some small seeds go too far into the drum holes and get "crimped" when the cutoff wheel rolls over them. This causes skips in the kernels planted and reduced seed population.

One solution is to buy a seed drum with smaller holes (called a "popcorn" drum) and change drums as needed. Another solution is to buy rubber belts which fit around the seed drum. The

extra thickness prevents cutoff wheels from crimping protruding seed tips.

"A set of seed drum belts costs less than a new drum and, once installed, avoids the need to change drums," Bohling said.

Most John Deere planters have a vacuum seed meter or a finger pickup meter. The company has issued special bulletins reviewing maintenance and adjustment procedures necessary to maximize planter performance with all sizes of seed corn.

For example, with the finger pickup meter, worn brushes often cause the planter to overpopulate. The company recommends replacing them every 100 hours or more frequently if wear exceeds described limits. Also, small seed may magnify excessive seed drop if the carrier plate becomes worn.

John Deere also recommends reducing planting speed when using small seed. Cut speed two to three miles per hour for the very smallest seed — that weighing between 25 and 30 pounds per 80 thousand kernels.

Operating speed affects John Deere finger pickup and vacuum meters in exactly opposite ways. Generally, driving the planter faster than the recommended speed increases seed drop of the finger pickup meter and decreases seed drop of the vacuum meter.

"If you have problems or questions about plantability of any seed size, consult your operator's manual, see your implement dealer or ask your seed dealer," Bohling said.

NFU Kicks Off Petition To Reopen Farm Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The National Farmers Union (NFU) has begun a nationwide petition campaign designed to show Congress and the Bush Administration a groundswell of support for reexamining the 1990 Farm Bill.

The petition drive, announced during a Washington news conference, is designed to ask Congress and the Bush Administration to make four major changes in the bill:

- Raise commodity loan rates to more effectively raise farm income from the marketplace.
- Increase dairy price support levels at the same time that inventory-management programs are utilized.
- Target program benefits to family-scale producers and
- Strengthen food and nutrition programs, such as food stamps and WIC (Women, Infants and Children).

The farm bill, signed by Presi-

dent Bush last month, has been characterized by Farmers Union leaders as "more poison than antidote" for the struggling rural economy. "We're not asking for more spending on farm programs," said NFU President Leland Swenson. "But there are ways to make the farm bill work for farmers within current budget constraints."

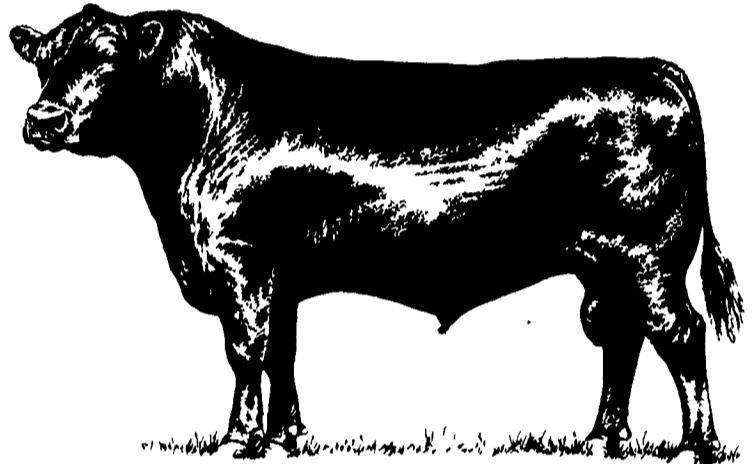
Swenson said his group is asking for both administrative and legislative changes in the bill. NFU released copies of a letter sent to USDA Secretary Clayton Yeutter which outlines a series of discretionary actions the secretary can take to "help restore farmers' confidence in farm programs." Swenson said the new farm bill is not set in stone and that Yeutter has the power to determine "whether it is a tombstone or the cornerstone of new opportunities."

Late last year, a number of analysts projected that farm program

spending cuts would result in like decreases in net farm income. During the farm bill debate in Congress, NFU lobbied for supply stabilizing provisions and other mechanisms aimed at stimulating farm market prices. "Giving farmers the tools they need to get income from the marketplace instead of from the government is a much more sensible approach to saving federal dollars than simply cutting farm income," said Swenson.

The petition states that, as a result of current market conditions and the affects of the farm bill as it now stands, "rural America is facing another devastating round of losses among farmers and rural communities."

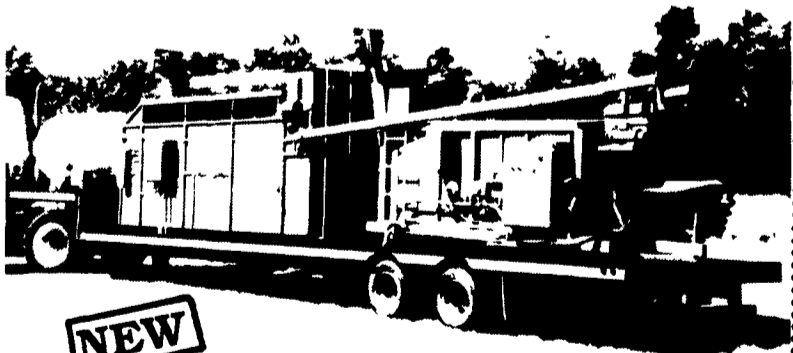
NFU expects to collect signatures until March 1, when the petitions will be gathered at the group's Philadelphia convention, then delivered to President Bush and the chairmen of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees.



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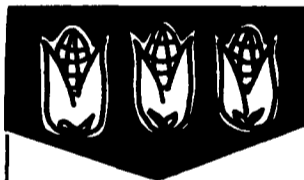
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