CORN TALK NEWS
PENNSYLVANIA MASTER CORN GROWERS ASSOC., INC.

Considerations for selecting corn hybrids

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allows them to collect yield information from individual fields or groups of fields planted to the same hybrids can usually estimate performance of hybrids quite well. Fields that were planted late or unusually stressed should be deleted from any comparisons.

This evaluation system works best where a large number of similarly managed fields are being compared. By comparing hybrid performance on different soils, you may be able to detect differences in hybrid stability or stress tolerance.

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY

Another important part of hybrid selection is developing a strategy on how to pick and place corn hybrids on your farm. Part of your strategy should include some diversification—use a group of hybrids, perhaps 5 to 10, rather than relying on just a few. These hybrids should have some differences in maturity, even if differences are relatively small. This helps to reduce the risk of weather related stress on your corn crop. Mixtures of about 20 per cent short-season, 60 per cent medium-season, and 20 per cent full-season (a 10-day range in relative maturity) hybrid maturities are good compromises to avoid weather risks and allow for timely harvesting. The need for diversity in hybrid choices is probably greater in areas where drought stress is common. Another consideration should be use of new hybrids. Generally, new hybrids are best used on a limited acreage until you become confident with their performance on your farm. As you gain confidence with a hybrid, use it for more of your acreage. After a hybrid becomes four to five years old, evaluate its performance carefully, because newer hybrids with improved performance often have been developed by this time.

A final consideration in your strategy should be to try to place hybrids on the farm as best as you can. Use some secondary characteristics of the hybrids. This is especially important if you have different soil types or tillage systems. Use hybrids with greater stability or drought tolerance on shallow soils and hybrids with high yield potential under ideal conditions on the best soils. In no-till fields, you may want to consider hybrids with better gray leaf spot resistance or early season vigor.

SUMMARY

The process of selecting hybrids is integral to profitable corn production. A key component of the process is identifying characteristics that are important in your particular situation. Pay attention to details in observing the crop during the season. Learn to identify corn diseases, note the maturity and other characteristics of the hybrid, and take some time to make yield comparisons. Collect any appropriate information you can on available hybrids from industry, university trials, neighbors, or other sources. Using this information, make informed hybrid choices based as much as possible on performance data. Plant the hybrids you have chosen in situations where they are best adapted. Finally, during the season, spend some time evaluating your choices.

Prepared by: Greg W. Roth, assistant professor of agronomy