

# Producers Should Analyze Corn Test Plots

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nificant difference between the center valley farmland and the side-valley farm fields.

Craig said that after assessing the range of growing conditions available on a farm's fields, the farmer has a better idea of what to seek in a corn variety.

It is after the farmer develops a solid idea of what he needs that he should review the sources of data available on varieties. And then, that review must be done with an understanding of what the information means.

A producer should then visit a local demonstration plot to

see firsthand what results can be expected.

In order to evaluate a test plot, the producer should maintain a checklist on different varieties offered, and for each field visited.

That checklist may contain as many variables as a producer deems necessary to use for a meaningful comparison between varieties.

There are some standards which Craig said should be considered: planting date, seeding rate, amount of starter fertilizer, plant height, leafiness, stalk thickness, stalk hardness, ear numbers and location

(height), ear length, cob diameter, kernel maturity, husk development, root development, soil texture, soil consistency, location in the field, apparent hardness to competition, apparent insect and pest resistance, and row consistency.

One way of making a comparison chart is to use a legal-sized tablet and create columns by draw dividing lines length wise.

On the left border column, each of the standards for comparison can be listed. At the top of the columns a variety's name can be entered.

The date, location and a brief

description of the corn trial plot should be entered at the top for easy reference.

Allow enough depth in the cross-columns to allow for notes.

Even if it takes three pages to list the standards of comparison, once the notes are taken back home, the paper can be laid out into one large chart for easier comparison.

Also, any additional notes of interest, such as disease problems in the area, etc., can be entered at the end of the chart.

Once in the field, Craig said that growers should compare end-row plants for potential

and then walk back along the row into the field to determine plant conditions. In fact the chart can allow for two entries with each standard for comparison — one for the end row plants (potential) and another for observances 10 to 15 feet into the row (under competition).

Also, an easy way to determine stalk strength is to purposefully push forward on the top end of the plant to see if it bends or breaks — breakage can be a sign of corn worm damage, or brittle stalk development.

Inspect the ears for apparent husk protection from worm and bird damage.

Check the stripped ears at the end of the row and back in the row to get an idea of ear development potential and what it is like under real field stress. Check for apparent pollination problems.

Really look at the soil conditions where the plants are located in the field — if possible check for how well the variety has performed in the low lying areas, on side hills and on ridges.

According to Craig, there are many considerations that must be made by a producer in order for him to grow the most efficient crop for a specific market. Those who seek silage potential will naturally prefer certain characteristics, while a grain cash crop producer may have other aspects which are higher in priority.

When creating the checklist, don't worry about setting them in prioritized manner. That can be done in review of the data collected.

Those seeking additional help in learning how to better analyze corn trial plots or design them should contact their local county extension agent.

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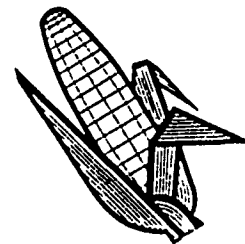
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