



CORN TALK

PENNSYLVANIA MASTER CORN GROWERS ASSOC., INC.

Corn Talk, Lancaster Farming, Saturday, October 8, 1994

Know Farm's 'Microenvironment,' Says Corn Grower President

ANDY ANDREWS
Lancaster Farming Staff
MONTOURSVILLE (Lycoming Co.) — "You have to know the micro-environment of every place you farm in order to be able to make an intelligent choice in seed corn selection," said Curt Rakestraw, newly elected president of the Pennsylvania Master Corn Growers Association, Inc.

During an interview early last month with *Lancaster Farming*, Rakestraw toured several of the 31 different farm sites he rents in the farm valley north of North White Deer Ridge. At one Penn State research test plot (one of several early to medium season plots statewide) on land leased from Joe Youman's Farm in Fairfield Township, Rakestraw spoke about some of the important factors growers should consider when picking a variety.

Rakestraw farms about 1,100 acres of crops (700 acres in corn, 150 acres in small grain, and 150 acres in hay) with his brother Dave. Curt said that a farmer must know the qualities of the soil and the environment as a whole.

"We have some clay and rock," he said. "They say this is where the glaciers did their most damage. The edge of the glacier was right here. So we get a little bit of everything around here."

Rakestraw said a lot of the land he rents to grow corn has a lot of different varieties of soil, ranging from a Hagerstown silt loam to shaley loam to red clay. At one farm near the Lycoming Mall, he said "we were told there were 17 different soil types in three of the strips," he said. "And I believe it. When you plow it, it just changes every hundred feet or so."

(Turn to Page 2)



If looking at the corn crops is any indication, it could be a banner year. At the Raymond Rinker farm in Upper Fairfield Township, near Montoursville, corn measures about 13 feet tall. At the Lycoming Mall farm, corn measures 14 feet tall, with ears on the stalk about head-high.

Pa. Crops Conference Slated For January

CARLISLE (Cumberland Co.) — A new crop production conference which brings together corn, soybean, and forage crop producers will be held January 16-17, 1995 here at the Embers Inn and Convention Center.

This conference will be cosponsored by the Pennsylvania Master Corn Growers Association, the Pennsylvania Forage and Grassland Council, and the Mid Atlantic Soybean Association.

The conference will focus on technologies essential to crop producers in the state. This marks the first time a joint conference of this magnitude has been held in the state.

Keith Eckel, president of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, is scheduled as the keynote speaker on the first day of the conference. He will discuss Pennsylvania Agriculture in the year 2010 and the adjustments necessary to be part of the industry then.

The keynote speaker for the second day of the conference will be John Holt, a farm management professor from the University of Florida. John is a widely recognized and entertaining speaker on farm management issues. He will address "Getting the Most Out of Your Employees" and "Getting the Most Out of Your Management" in two presentations.

The conference will also include a variety of breakout

(Turn to Page 6)

PENNSYLVANIA MASTER CORN GROWERS ASSOCIATION

Between The Rows

Dr. Greg Roth
Penn State Agronomy
Assistant Professor

SOIL QUALITY AND CORN PRODUCTION

A few years ago, the term "soil quality" became fashionable. As with most fashionable items, I resisted using it initially. But the more I visit corn fields around Pennsylvania, the more I see a need for us to think about soil quality and how we can maintain it in our production systems.

What are the symptoms of a soil that is lacking in quality? Soil scientists tell us that this would be a soil that is lacking in properties that are essential for it to

perform well. This could include factors such as fertility, biological activity, organic matter, or physical properties.

As a corn specialist, my perception of soils that are lacking in quality are those where corn grows less vigorously than others, where water appears to run off rather than infiltrate, appear to have few earthworms, and those where the corn is the first to show signs of drought. For the most part, these problems are related to physical and biological problems in the soil rather than soil fertility issues.

We have known for a long time that certain practices can contribute to a degradation of the soil. It is well docu-

(Turn to Page 23)

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Farm Calendar

Monday, November 7
Agronomy Ag Service School, Arena Restaurant, Bedford, contact Melanie Barkley (814) 623-4800 for details.

Tuesday, November 8
Agronomy Ag Service School, Penn State DuBois Campus, Dubois, contact Sue DuFour (814) 849-7361 for details.

Wednesday, November 9
Agronomy Ag Service School, Days Inn, Meadville, contact

Tom Zundel (412) 662-3141 for details.

Monday, December 5
Agronomy Ag Service School, Brynwood Inn, Lewisburg, contact Norm Conrad (717) 524-8721 for details.

Tuesday, December 6
Agronomy Ag Service School, Sinbad's Restaurant, Wyo, contact Mark Madden (717) 265-2896 for details.

(Turn to Page 5)