

For Snook, Standability's

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yield of 195.8 bushels per acre, all with Pioneer 3293.

This is not the first top award he has captured in the nearly 20 years he has entered the contest. However, Snook's reasons for entering don't center on the awards.

"We've been doing this about every year. I don't like to jump in one year and miss another year. Even the year 1991, which was a drought year, there's a lot of people who pulled their entries. I don't like to do that," Snook said. "They send us a report back and in our county, the extension agent requires that you do a budget plan. We have to include all investments . . . the amount of equipment we have, the number of acres we farm . . . It's not only on this corn, it's on our whole operation."

The reports Snook and other farmers in the area receive back include figures for the average cost per acre on everything. To Snook, this information is worth all the effort.

Snook gained some of his corn growing expertise when he worked for Doeblers from 1967-1977.

"We used to raise seed corn here," he said. "I worked there part time. What would happen is that I'd work there in the fall and the spring and I'd be off in the summer and in the winter I'd be off a while."

When Doeblers downsized production in the East, Snook and his wife, Nancy, decided to look into other enterprises. They started working with Pioneer Hybrids and ventured into the hog business. They also dabbled in the hay business in the early 1980s.

"We built our hog house in 1977. We started with sows and raising feeder pigs. In about 1980 we switched over to finishing too," he said. "A couple of years ago because of the lack of extra help, we got rid of the sows and now all we do is finish."

As an independent producer, the Snooks finish between 400-500 hogs per year on Snook's OK Hog Farm. They also raise about 700 acres of corn and soybeans, mostly on rented ground.

"There's a lot of people who have farms they don't want to farm in the area," said Snook. "Every year it seems you get offered more land. We have written agreements with the owners usually for three to five years."

Snook is responsible for all the improvements to the land.

The corn is grown for both high moisture corn and dry shell corn.

He notes that his harvest is not as fast as other farmers because he works at it himself, especially when he's drying the corn. When he's harvesting the corn for high moisture corn, truckers are hired and the corn is taken off at a quicker pace.

Often, because of the weather, Snook is not able to get all

the corn out of the fields in the fall. This past year was one of those years where having corn standing was to his advantage.

"We had corn out there after the first of December. About the middle of December the price of corn went up. From the first part of December to the last we gained \$.25. We sold corn over the holidays which we were harvesting and bringing in to the bin, drying it and emptying it right out. I've seen this happen year after year, so one of the big factors that I'm a big stickler on is corn standability. That's the whole key to our outfit as far as I am concerned. That's why we went to Pioneer because we got better dry down and better standability. I select hybrids on how well they stand."

Snook also watches hybrids closely for disease.

"We're down along the river where we get a lot of fog. Sometimes we get a lot of fungus diseases and some corn really gets it bad," said Snook. "This past year there weren't a lot of problems with anything. I'm really fussy."

Before planting a whole field in a new hybrid, Snook will usually develop a test plot.

"We put a test plot out every year. I'm looking at not just basic yield, I want to know about standability and dry down," he said.

If there is another key to making Snook a successful corn grower, it is in planting the corn.

"A lot of guys say you can't grow continuous corn. We're only growing about 125 acres of soybeans. We do that to break up the rotation and we feed them to the pigs.

"The planting part is the most important part," said Snook. "You've got to check the seed depth yourself. If you don't plant right, you don't have a harvest."

Snook also believes in taking it slow. He doesn't plant over about four miles per hour to ensure more accurate seed placement.

Although he does plant some of his corn with the no-till method, he relies on the chisel plow and the standard moldboard plow.

"We no-till about 200 acres. We have better results on an average with conventional. This past year we averaged 20 more bushels per acre on conventional than on no-till," he said. "When we get a dry spell, it really hurts our no-till."

No-till also means more herbicide and more potential for disease.

"What I've done is take fields where I've no-tilled a section and then chisel plowed a strip. It looks like strip farming, but we actually put it all in corn. I see some real results where we've no-tilled and chisel plowed and then after four to five years go in there and moldboard again. It's really a stand out. So, the bottom line is, we're keeping our plows!"

What this ultimately means to the Snooks is that they concentrate on rotating tillage methods more than rotating crops.

His main fertilizer is the pig manure, but he's careful not to apply too much.

"We didn't find we were getting any more results after 15 tons per acre. We did a study with the Soil Conservation Service on applying manure at different rates. We found out we were getting our best yields at that level. We try to redistribute the manure over more acres. It costs us a little more money to do it, but it pays in the long run," he said.

His pig manure runs at about 10-11-10 on an analysis. This past year he added a 10-34-0 starter at eight gallons per acre when he planted his corn.

Snook is also a big believer in the Pennsylvania Crop Management Association. In fact, he helped start the West Branch Crop Management Association.

During the growing season, technicians visit the farm to scout for weeds and pests. They also check moisture content, percent lodging and other factors in the crop and take soil samples to give the farmers fertilizer recommendations.

For Snook, the technicians are like having a hired hand. With their help, he can concentrate on planting or harvesting while they scout for pests and check the field conditions.

"Basically a lot of farmers want their high moisture corn from 25-28 percent moisture," explained Snook. "You can look at the reports and know which fields to harvest first. We cover about seven miles. I don't like to go to a field and find that it's not ready."



Crop management records are an important tool to Ed Snook who captured first place in the three year average, regular harvest size, shelled grain class in the 1994 Pennsylvania Corn Club competition.

Use of the technicians has also allowed Snook to virtually eliminate insecticide use.

"I haven't used any insecticide for five or six years. That's why we went to some soybeans. When a field gets a high threshold, I push it into soybeans for a year," he explained. "That was a crop management principle. It you take the time to do your scouting, you'll know what you have out there."

Knowing what's in the field also helps Snook determine which herbicides he will use.

"I'm going to change my

herbicide program and go back to what I used to use," said Snook. "For the past year or two I tried to do it all pre-emerge, now I'm going to go back to post-emerge. We're having a problem with a couple of weeds where we'll get better results with post emergence."

What Snook would like to see someday is a corn efficiency contest.

"I'd like to see who can raise the most corn with the least amount of cost," he said. "In a heavy dairy state this could be done really easy."

Marathon Oil Announces ETBE Production

ST. LOUIS, Mo. — Marathon Oil Company, Findlay, Ohio announced it would immediately begin producing ethyl tertiary butyl ether (ETBE) at the company's Robinson, Ill. refinery. This will be the first full-scale production of ETBE, an oxygenate additive made from ethanol, to occur in the United States.

"This is a significant first step in helping to diversify the role of ethanol in America's gasoline pool. The continued use of ethanol blends, the development of E-85 vehicles, and now ETBE, all help to fulfill the Clinton Administration's objectives to lessen our dependence on fossil fuels and reduce global warming," said Rod Gangwish, president of the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) and a farmer from Shelton, Neb.

Marathon had been producing methanol based, MTBE at the Robinson refinery but has decided to make the switch to ETBE for economic reasons. Produc-

tion levels will range from 1,500 to 1,600 barrels per day or approximately 63,000 to 65,000 gallons of ETBE per day. Ethanol will comprise roughly 40 percent of the total ETBE gallon, with the remaining 60 percent being isobutylene, a butane based refinery by-product.

Marathon cites the recent ruling by the Treasury Department to allow the application of the Federal Excise Tax Exemption for ethanol blends to ETBE, as the reason for the switch.

Daniel Moenter, manager of governmental affairs for Marathon, said, "This change in refinery operation will benefit both the environment and agri-

cultural interests in Illinois." While not the first to produce ETBE, Marathon Oil will be the only fully dedicated ETBE etherification unit in operation. Arco Chemical is also producing ETBE, but has yet to "scale-up" to major production levels. Most of their production has been on a test market basis.

"We are very optimistic but the extent of ETBE use has yet to be determined, variables such as the price of imported methanol, production and logistical considerations for ethanol and the final ruling of the U.S. Court of Appeals on the Renewable Oxygenate Requirement, will all play a role in shaping the future of ETBE," Gangwish said.

