

# Corn Talk News

## RESEARCH UPDATE



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

### EL NINO EFFECTS

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Several Iowa State scientists — R. E. Carlson, D. P. Todey, and S. E. Taylor — recently published a report in the Journal of Production Agriculture in which they compared Midwestern corn yields, weather, and the El nino phenomenon since 1900.

They grouped years into El nino years, La Nina years, and in between years.

El nino years are characterized as those with a sea surface temperature warming in the eastern and central equatorial Pacific. La nina years are those with colder than normal sea surface temperatures in this section of the Pacific.

El ninos have generally been associated with better than average crop production with droughts common in between El nino events. Recently, an

exceptionally long El nino (1991-1995) ended in the Pacific Ocean.

In years when the El nino was in effect, there was a tendency for yield to be above average and in years when the La nina was in effect, there was a tendency for yields to be lower than expected.

During the La nina, for example, Iowa corn yields from only one year were 10 percent above the average predicted yield, yet in six of 15 years were 10 percent below predicted yield.

During the 22 El nino years, seven had yields that were 10 percent above the average predicted yield and only three had yields that were 10 percent below the predicted yield.

The yield trends in this study indicated that above-average corn yields are associated with the El nino phase in Iowa and other Corn Belt States except Missouri because of more pre-

cipitation and cooler temperatures, especially during August.

One researcher has suggested this effect may cause storms to track more southward, resulting in more favorable weather for the Corn Belt. On the average, yields were about nine percent higher during El nino years compared to

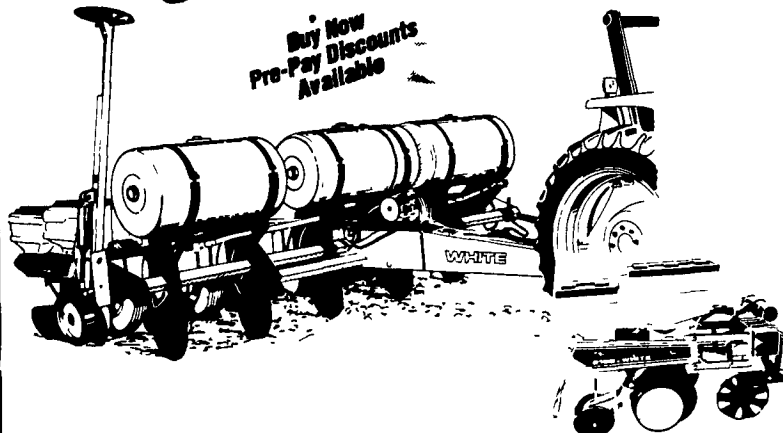
La nina years.

The authors also calculated the deviation from normal for precipitation and temperature in El nino years and found that there is some variation across the Corn Belt. Precipitation in August is 1.5 inches above normal in central Iowa in El nino years but only 0.5 inches above normal in eastern Ohio.

The authors conclude that while there is no clear physical relationship between the El nino and Midwestern weather, there are some strong tendencies for more favorable weather during El nino years.

As meteorologists improve their ability to predict the El nino, Midwestern yield forecasts should improve as well.

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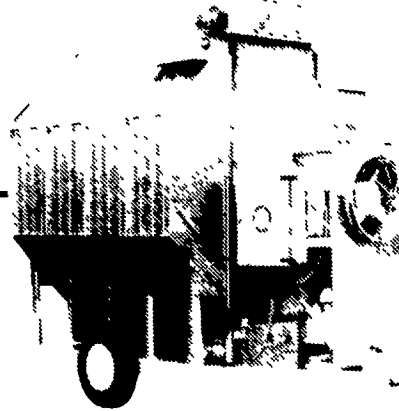
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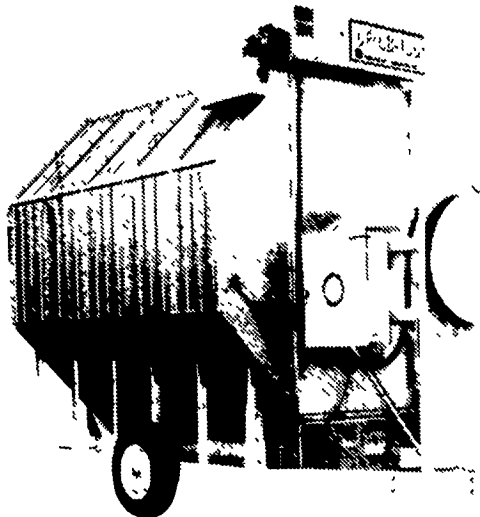
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