

Balanced Diet Is Essential For Corn Plant Development

NORCROSS, Ga. — Potassium, just like nitrogen and phosphorus, is essential for developing corn's genetic yield potential. Plant physiologists have set the yield potential well in excess of 500 bushels of grain per acre. yet, the national average for all U.S. corn producers have not reached one third of that

potential. Some yield can be lost due to disease, crop injury by pests, competition by weeds, stress from inadequate moisture or high temperature, timeliness of operations, or perhaps due to inadequate nutrition. Potassium nutrition could be one of those factors in need of attention for

corn yield improvements. Corn must absorb its potassium from soil reserves and/or from applied fertilizer potassium sources. Regardless of source, a corn crop yielding in the 180 bushel per acre range will require nearly 240 pounds of potassium to produce the roots, stems, leaves, and grain. The nutrient reservoir of many soils is inadequate to supply the total potassium needs of high yielding corn, especially during the critical peak demand period just prior to silking.

The functions of potassium in corn growth are well known. Research by universities and private industry scientists identify why potassium is a vital part of a balanced fertilization program for corn.

Effective and efficient use of nitrogen. Potassium teams with nitrogen and sulfur to

produce protein essential for plant growth. It helps to improve protein level and quality of corn silage for optimum feed value and forage digestibility by livestock. Environmentally, it helps put more of the available nitrogen into the plant where it belongs.

Optimum rate of photosynthesis. Potassium, nitrogen, phosphorus and magnesium are team members in this process of converting sunlight, water, and carbon dioxide into sugars and forms of stored energy for plant growth. Potassium helps to regulate the supply of carbon dioxide available for photosynthesis, the rate of sugar use by plants during respiration, and more than 60 enzymes systems associated with plant growth.

Movement of sugars from leaves to grain. Potassium is needed for efficient move-

ment of sugars from leaves, conversion of sugars into starch, and optimum grain fill. A severe shortage of potassium in corn can delay silk emergence, create pollination problems, and result in poorly filled grain on the tip-end of ears.

Corn, whether grown in Kansas, Illinois, or Georgia, performs best when plant nutrition is removed as a yield limiting factor. Potassium is essential for best use of nitrogen, phosphorus and all other production inputs. It helps growers put more high-quality grain in the bin at harvest time, generate optimum profits and do it in an environmentally sound manner.

For more information, contact Dr. Noble R. Usherwood, Southeast Director, PPI, 655 Engineering Drive, Suite 110, Norcross, GA, 30092-2837. E-mail: usherwod@ppi-far.com.

President Signs Bill Extending Ethanol Incentive

WASHINGTON, D.C. — President Clinton signed into law an omnibus transportation bill that extends the excise tax exemption for ethanol-blended gasoline through 2007. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21) was overwhelmingly approved by the House and Senate in May.

Ethanol cleans the air, lowers fuel costs, and reduces U.S. dependence on foreign oil. By supporting the extension of the ethanol tax incentive, Congress and the Clinton administration have done right by all Americans."

"Today's signing of TEA 21 marks the culmination of a hard-fought battle by farmers and other ethanol supporters. Now we can move ahead with the business of building the domestic ethanol industry — an industry that generates jobs, revitalizes rural communities and provides an important market for home-grown corn," said National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) President Ryland Utlaut, who attended the White House signing ceremony.

Utlaut, who raises corn, soybeans and wheat in Grand Pass, Mo., emphasized the significance of the ethanol market to U.S. farmers. "We're operating in an environment of extreme uncertainty right now. Corn prices are down and agricultural export projections have dropped significantly due to the Asian financial crisis, weak foreign currencies and other factors. This makes value-added domestic markets such as ethanol increasingly important."

Consuming approximately seven percent of the U.S. corn crop, ethanol is one of the largest industrial uses for corn. In addition, many farmers and rural communities have invested in ethanol-producing cooperatives. More than 80 percent of U.S. ethanol plants are owned by small producers. These small-scale facilities, with more than 25,000 members and about \$1.3 billion in capital investment, are the fastest-growing sources of ethanol production, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"Obviously, farmers and rural citizens have a vested economic interest in ethanol," said Utlaut. "But the benefits of this home-grown, renewable fuel extend far beyond farm country.

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