

New Starter Formulation Shows Promise

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — In Penn State studies, ammonium sulfate continues to perform as well or better than conventional starters, offering growers an alternative to high-phosphate formulations.

"There are environmental concerns about applying phosphate fertilizer to soils that already have high levels," said Doug Beegle, Penn State agronomist. "By switching to ammonium sulfate, growers can give corn an early-season boost without adding more phosphate to the soil."

Low-phosphate blends made with ammonium sulfate also cost less than high-phosphate formulations, noted Penn State agronomist Greg Roth. Every 100 pounds of ammonium sulfate supplies 21 pounds of nitrogen and 24 pounds of sulfur.

In 2000, Roth included ammonium sulfate in corn starter

trials in Hershey and Rockspring. The soil type was a Hagerstown silt loam, which has traditionally been considered non-responsive to sulfur. "Ammonium sulfate improved early-season corn growth in both locations," said Roth. "At Rockspring, ammonium sulfate also increased yields by 12 bushels per acre."

In a separate trial, also in 2000, Beegle worked with county agents to establish on-farm trials comparing traditional starters to ammonium sulfate. On high P-testing soils, ammonium sulfate was as good or better than complete NPK blends, Beegle reported.

Continuing the study in 2001, Beegle and Roth compared ammonium sulfate to a 10-30-10 formulation in starter applications on high-phosphate soils. Averaged over 21 sites, ammonium sulfate and 10-30-10 had a similar effect on early-season growth. Yield was taken from 19 sites and, again, ammonium sulfate and 10-30-10 produced similar results.

"Both of the starter treatments produced significant yield increases on six out of 19 sites," said Roth. "At three of the six sites, yields were significantly higher with ammonium sulfate versus the 10-30-10 starter."

Corn seedlings still need phosphorus, said Beegle. But with ammonium sulfate in the starter, corn seedlings can get the $P_2 O_5$ they need from the soil instead of from extra fertilizer.

"Sometimes when seedlings are in cold soil, the roots grow so slowly that they can't reach residual phosphate," Beegle said. "By putting nitrogen in corn starter, you're stimulating root growth so that roots can reach residual $P_2 O_5$ easier and faster."

In addition, the ammonium form of nitrogen enhances root uptake of phosphorus.

Ammonium sulfate is safe for pop-up applications, as well as for two-by-two placement, as long as appropriate rate guidelines are followed.

PCGA Recognizes Top State Membership Recruiter

STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.) — The Pennsylvania Corn Growers Association (PCGA) recently recognized Carl Cassidy of Spring Mills, as the top recruiter in the organization for the recruiting year of 2001-2002.

Cassidy recruited a total of seven new members for PCGA during the year. Carl is employed as an agronomist with Helena in Warriors Mark.

Last year, PCGA participated in a national recruitment program with NCGA that made available prizes to local recruiters who brought a minimum of five new members into the organization.

Cassidy's prize was a \$300 Sears Gift Card.

Syngenta Crop Protection and Syngenta Seeds sponsored the recruitment program along with NCGA. PCGA has 292 members in Pennsylvania. NCGA is a national organization founded in 1957 and represents more than 31,000 dues-paying corn growers from 48 states.



Carl Cassidy, right, received the 2001-2002 PCGA state recruiter prize from PCGA executive secretary Greg Roth.



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