

Twin-Row Corn Alternative To Traditional Technique

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Twin-row corn production a system of planting in narrower rows is not a new concept, but it's getting a fresh look from growers interested in an alternative production technique.

Peter Thomison, an Ohio State University Extension agronomist, said that interest in twin row corn is surging and the system may offer some agronomic and financial benefits that conventional and narrow-row systems don't provide. Anywhere from 90 percent to 95 percent of corn in Ohio is planted using a conventional 30-inch row system.

"Twin rows got a fresh look when there was a resurgence

of narrow rows, generally defined as row spacings of 22 inches or less, in the mid-90s. There was this perception that narrow rows might have a lot more yield potential than conventional row spacings," said Thomison. "People started looking at twin rows because it offered an alternative to narrow rows without having to make any major changes in production practices."

Research studies have suggested that a narrow-row production system offers slightly higher yields than a conventional system, although results have been inconsistent.

In a conventional row-spacing system, corn is planted in a single row 30 inches apart from a neighboring row. In a

typical narrow-row system, 20 inches separates each corn-row. Twin row systems fall in-between conventional and narrow row, with two rows of corn planted six to seven inches apart within a conventional spacing system.

Thomison said that like narrow rows, twin-row systems may perform better at higher seeding rates.

"If growers can get fairly consistent yields with twin row, then they could justify using the system. As opposed to narrow row, a twin-row system allows a grower to use existing 30-inch equipment," said Thomison. "Such a system would provide a financial savings for the grower because it doesn't incur the costs of

converting to narrow-row equipment."

Ohio State researchers conducted a three-year study to determine the yield potential of twin row corn production. The study, which compared the twin-row system to 30-inch (conventional) and 15-inch (narrow) row configurations, found that the twin-row system performed as well or better than the other production systems, with a yield advantage over the conventional system ranging from 4 to 15 percent.

"We only looked at one corn hybrid," said Thomison. "So there is still a lot of work that needs to be done with this system to determine how other hybrids respond to it

and how other agronomic characteristics are impacted."

Thomison said one problem researchers are finding is that with higher seeding rates comes a higher potential for lodging, a condition whereby corn stalks fall over making harvest difficult.

"If a grower has high yields now and is growing high plant populations, twin-row production may be one approach he can take if he is looking for an alternate planting option," said Thomison.

Researchers speculate the boost in yields from twin-row and narrow-row systems may be due in part to a more rapid plant canopy development that translates into higher yield potentials.

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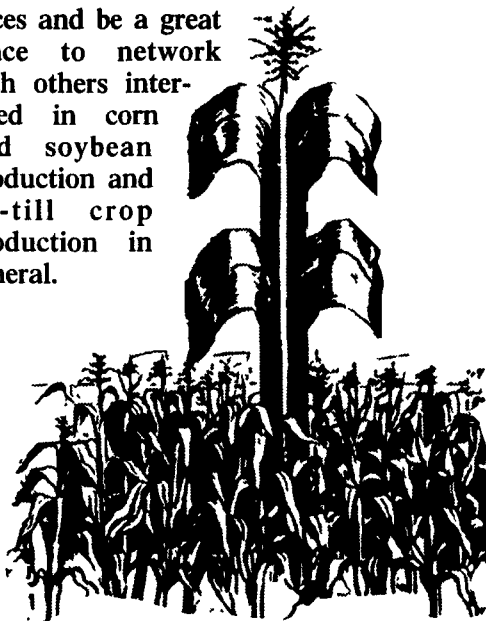
Mark your calendar for the new statewide combined crops and no-till conference in 2004, scheduled Jan. 30 at the Grantville Holiday Inn near Harrisburg.

This year's conference will continue to address a number of topics on corn and soybean production. We'll focus this year on how foreign markets affect Pennsylvania grain prices and we'll also take an in-depth look at the potential of biodiesel and soy-based lubricants in Pennsylvania.

Other keynote speakers will address soil quality issues in relation to no-till and how we can manage compaction and still no-till corn and soybeans.

A number of breakout sessions are being developed on new technologies important for corn and soybean producers and will also address several addition issues on no-tilling in difficult situation.

The combined conference should attract a wider audience than the individual conferences and be a great place to network with others interested in corn and soybean production and no-till crop production in general.



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