



"Employee Owned & Customer Driven"

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Organic matter mineralization

Moisture content an important factor in soybean harvest

By Ron O'Hanlon, president

Awareness of grain moisture content is more important for soybeans than for most other row crops harvested on the High Plains. Since soybeans are sold by weight, farmers will sustain a loss of potential income when selling soybeans below 13 percent moisture.

When soybeans are at full maturity, where 95 percent of the pods have reached their mature pod color, it may only take five to 10 good drying days before the beans are ready for harvest. When soybeans are ready for harvest, they may dry very quickly. It is not unusual to see grain moisture drop

several percentage points during the day, as the beans are being harvested.

Soybean harvest can start any time the moisture content is below 18 percent, but most farmers prefer to harvest below 16 percent moisture. It is common to begin harvesting while some leaves are still attached and there is still some green color in the stems. Delaying harvest greatly increases shatter losses as the moisture content decreases. Loss from shattering can easily exceed 10 percent or more, when the moisture content drops below 13 percent.

The elevator price dockage for soybeans at 14 percent moisture is usually less than it would be for selling soybeans at 12 percent and with accompanying shatter loss. A 10 percent shatter loss from a field yielding a potential 50 bushels per acre would result in about \$25/acre loss just from shattering, if using the loan rate for soybeans.

Table 1 (shown), from the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension *Crop Watch* newsletter, shows the potential income loss from selling soybeans at less than 13 percent grain moisture.

Visit with Crop Quest representatives at the following events:

- Wichita Farm Show, Nov. 6-8, 2001, Wichita, Kan.
- Amarillo Farm Show, Nov. 27-29, 2001, Amarillo, Tex.
 - F.A.C.T. Conference, Jan. 7-8, 2002, Liberal, Kan.
 - Topeka Farm Show, Jan. 8-10, 2002, Topeka, Kan.
 - Enid AgriFest, Jan. 11-12, 2002, Enid, Okla.
- No-Till on the Plains, Jan. 20-21, 2002, Salina, Kan.
- Colorado Farm Show, Jan. 22-24, 2002, Greeley, Colo.
 - NAICC, Jan. 23-27, 2002, Albuquerque, NM
- K-State Precision Ag Conference, Jan. 29-30, 2002, Great Bend, Kan.
 - Natural Resources Mgt. Seminar, Feb. 21, 2002, Sterling, Colo.
- 3i Show, April 25-27, 2002, Great Bend, Kan.

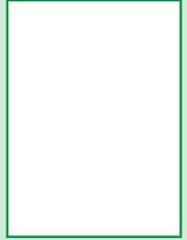
Table 1.

Potential loss from selling lower moisture soybeans							
Price, \$/bu		Market loss, \$/A					
		Moisture content, percent					
		13.0	12.0	11.0	10.0	9.0	8.0
4.50	0.00	2.56	5.06	7.50	9.89	12.23	
5.00	0.00	2.84	5.62	8.33	10.99	13.59	
5.50	0.00	3.13	6.18	9.17	12.09	14.95	
6.00	0.00	3.41	6.74	10.00	13.19	16.30	
6.50	0.00	3.69	7.30	10.83	14.29	17.66	
Equivalent bu/A because of reduced moisture							
50.0		49.4	48.9	48.3	47.8	47.3	

OUR MISSION: Crop Quest is an employee-owned company dedicated to providing the highest quality agricultural services for each customer. The quest of our network of professionals is to practice integrity and innovation to ensure our services are economically and environmentally sound.

From My *Perspective*

By **Rollie Stukenholtz, CEO**
Member - American Society of
Agricultural Consultants
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Finding reliable information

Whether we like it or not, virtually all information today is bought and paid for. The individual who said, “There ain’t no such thing as a free lunch,” sure knew what he was talking about. Yet, there are still some who believe just about anything they hear or read.

I know many of our customers listen to the popular farm talk radio program, AgriTalk, and many also subscribe to High Plains Journal. Former talk show host Ken Root shocked some people when he explained in his weekly High Plains Journal column why he gave up his AgriTalk radio program. Root referred to restrictions placed on the kind of conversations on his show that were considered damaging to companies that sponsor the program.

When companies sponsor any kind of information program, they do it for one purpose only—to generate more business for their company. Stockholders don’t like it when any company they own stock in doesn’t make a reasonable profit. You either make money or you don’t survive, and it is no different for farmers.

When companies sponsor farm tours or any kind of promotional event, they do it to build business and maintain their position of prominence in the eyes of their customers. They ultimately expect any investment they make in advertising or promotion to increase profitability.

Some will argue that only our public institutions provide a source of unbiased information that we can rely on. Once again, most research today is supported by the business community. I can cite numerous instances where public officials have been influenced by those companies who provide the financial support for their research. Public institutions compete against each other for research grant money, much as businesses compete for customers.

On many occasions, I have heard agronomists from one state talk down a crop variety released by another state in order to promote a variety they have released to the industry. After all, if they don’t have the best product, how can they justify their job and all the money they are costing for their support?

When an individual or company’s survival is determined by how much business they do, it is human nature to feel pain when anyone damages that business. In many cases, people promoting such a product or cause are convinced they are doing the right thing.

Where is all the profit?

We have heard for years that farmers must become the middleman if they expect to get a bigger share of the consumer dollar. There is a lot of promotion for farmers to produce value-added products. As we watch company after company either go broke or merge with other companies to survive, we have to ask, where is all the profit?

I have watched the vast number of developments where farmers joined together to start packing plants, feedyards, straw board plants, wheat gluten plants, ethanol processing plants and others. When we look at the success rate of these ventures, we find that there haven’t been that many successes. Even the backbone of many communities—local coops—have struggled to survive, and many have gone out of business.

Compared to 50 years ago, an extremely high percentage of our food is consumed in restaurants. With the majority of housewives now in the work force, food is in the ready-to-heat-and-serve form. A much larger chunk of that consumer food dollar that used to go to farmers is now spent for extra processing and packaging.

Probably the most hazardous business to start in any community is a restaurant. Grocery stores have not made huge profits either, and many have fallen prey to the economic ax. It is easy to point to those companies that purchase farm products for taking advantage of farmers, and there are no doubt instances where this is justified.

On the other hand, the financial statements of these companies who purchase, process and market our farm production don’t show very many making unreasonable profits. Like the slogan, “Where’s the Beef?” we have to ask, where’s all the profit?

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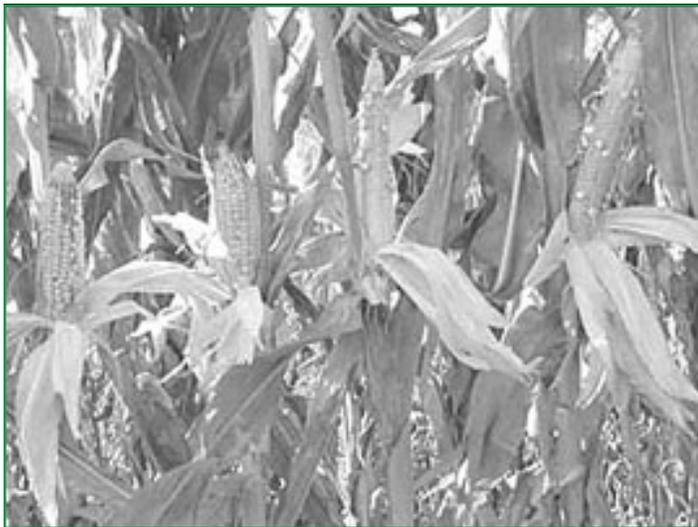
Many producers opt for ensilage this year

Due to heat and moisture stress, some corn fields failed to form an ear, or even pollinate (*fig. 1*). These fields had very low yield potential if harvested for grain, so many producers opted to salvage the crop by putting it up as ensilage (*fig. 2*).

Ensilage quality depends on the amount of grain that is produced, and the plant moisture of the crop when harvested. Sometimes, you do the best you can with the options you have.

It is not unusual to let the stressed areas get too dry, while waiting for the better areas to reach a maturity at which the crop can be harvested. Sometimes, it even pays to blend silage from different fields in order to improve the overall quality.

Fig. 1. Corn ears which failed to pollinate.



Grid sampling can help producers save money by maximizing fertilizer inputs

As your agronomist gets set to start pulling soil samples, consider the option of having some of those acres grid sampled.

Grid sampling enables producers to have their fertilizer applied more accurately and at appropriate levels, according to nutrient variability across a field. Through an effective grid sampling program, individuals can take advantage of some of the cost benefits associated with variable rate technology.

Not only can producers have a record of field variability changes from year to year, but grid sampling data can also be used to generate further information products, such as fertility maps, which are a valuable tool in making production decisions.

Visit with your Crop Quest agronomist about the benefits of grid sampling and how it may fit into your operation.

The unfortunate thing in years like this, is silage fields are quite common and the price drops quickly for what buyers are willing to pay. In some cases, a farmer cannot get his harvest cost returned for the price being paid.

Hopefully, in those instances, the farmer either has some insurance protection or they are able utilize the ensilage through their own feeding program.

Fig. 2. Ensilage cutting.



Deere to make combines from crops

Soybean and corn farmers may soon be driving combines made from the crop they harvested. Beginning with the 2002 model year, John Deere Harvester Works' entire line of combines will feature a soy-based panel, called HarvestForm™, made from soy polymer. Two other panels will be made from the soy and corn resin. This resin is said to add strength, flexibility and endurance to their design, and weighs 25 percent less than steel.

The materials were developed in part by funding from the soybean checkoff and the United Soybean Board, with technical support provided by John Deere.

Crop Quest welcomes new agronomist

Will Crowley recently joined Crop Quest's Garden City, Kan., division. Will is a graduate of Colorado State University, where he earned a bachelor of science degree in agronomy. His family grows apples in Cedaredge, Colo., and his hobbies include hunting and fishing.

Will is living and working in the Leoti, Kan., area. He can be reached by email at wcrowley@cropquest.com.

Out-Standing in the Field

By Ron O'Hanlon - President

Member of the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants, CPCC-I Certified

Soil testing important in determining nutrient needs

Soil testing should be a critical part of any crop management plan. The three most common soil nutrients important to plant development are nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium.

Soil testing is a calibrated method of determining what is available in the soil for crop usage, and what needs to be added from another source such as fertilizers, manures, or legume crops.

Soil nitrogen consists of both organic and mineral forms of nitrogen. However, organic forms comprise about 98 percent of the total soil nitrogen. In order for organic nitrogen to be available for crop usage, it must first be decomposed to mineral forms such as ammonium or nitrate that are available for plant use. This process is called mineralization and is responsible for the nitrogen-supplying power of the soil.

Normally, about 2 percent of the organic nitrogen is made available to crops each year, which accounts for about 20 to 30 pounds of nitrogen per acre. The western High Plains experienced higher-than-normal

temperatures over an extended period of time this past summer, which resulted in some crop losses due the heat and lack of rainfall. In some cases, crop losses resulted in 50 to 100 percent less yield and/or forage production.

It is quite common in years of higher-than normal-temperatures and lower crop production for carryover nitrogen in the soil to be higher than normal. The most common nitrogen test measures nitrate-nitrogen, since this is the predominate form of nitrogen taken up by the plant. Soil tests have already been taken on a number of stressed fields that have been harvested early.

It is not unusual to find carryover nitrogen for the next crop's usage to be running as high as 70 to 215 pounds of nitrogen per acre. If the cost of nitrogen is calculated at 15 cents per pound, this equates to a cost savings of \$10.50 to \$32.25 per acre for the next crop season. Soil testing—can you afford to farm without it?

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If you are interested in having a certain topic addressed in the monthly newsletter, or have newsworthy material to submit, please contact Tania Foster by email at tfoster@cropquest.com, or call 316-225-2233. Your input is appreciated.

