

CLIMATE IS WHAT WE EXPECT

Weather is what we get. A sure sign of Climate Change occurred this week when Brian and Keith Berns of Bladen, Nebraska were honored by the White House for their work with cover crops. Keith is a former Vo-Ag teacher in Fairbury. Is our climate changing? The answer is yes, ninety-eight percent of climate scientists agree that the climate is changing and is affected by human activity. What we need to remember is that both sides of the issue can use this data to Gerrymander models to fit their desired outcome. When it comes to the projected outcome of any particular climate model simulation, it would be difficult to get more than fifty percent of the same scientists to agree on any particular outcome. In the past 25 years average weather data in Southeast Nebraska has shown: a slight increase in average temperature, night time low, more frost free days (both spring and fall), warmer winters, slightly increased precipitation, increase in frequency of intense weather events, slight increase in humidity, and ratio of high to low temps.

I asked myself at a recent University of Nebraska workshop on climate, “Concerning climate changes, what should have we done in crop production to address the issue?” The list I made reflects potential changes made for lots of reasons. What I am saying is, they are changes which help us cope with the small climate changes of the last twenty-five years and the potential changes large or small in the next twenty-five.

These management factors are: Bigger machinery to accomplish field tasks in timely fashion, more machinery precision-GPS, plant early to take advantage of longer season, adopt conservation structures (terraces, buffers, diversions), higher soybean maturities, no-till farming methods to reduce fuel use, field operation time and protect the soil, improved soil fertility, improved machinery performance, change from furrow to pivot irrigation for better efficiency and fertigation options, schedule irrigation to improve efficiency and improve results with limited water, reduce crop stress (hybrid, seed treatment, weed control, GMO, fungicides, insecticides, field dry down, etc.), crop insurance and government farm programs for financial protection.

In the future we need to enhance all of these plus new concepts in: Soil health, develop a new era of soil conservation techniques and designs to handle intensity, address surface water variability, continue to find methods of dealing with limited water while maintaining yields, new era of crop fertility that is timely, precise and efficient, increase diversity of crops, and better integration of cropping systems with livestock.

For more information visit the News Column University of Nebraska Extension local Website:
gage.unl.edu, Twitter: @Cloverhay

Paul C Hay, Extension Educator

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Gage County • 1115 West Scott Street, Beatrice NE 68310

(402) 223-1384 • FAX: (402) 223-1370 • email: phay1@unl.edu

