

Views from VanDeWalle

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Innovative Youth Corn Challenge Contest 2022 Results

Since 2012, the Innovative Youth Corn Challenge has engaged 212 youth with in-depth, experiential learning. This partnership between the Nebraska Corn Board and Nebraska Extension has created an awareness of agronomic-related career opportunities and successfully involved youth in rigorous hands-on inquiry-based learning through completion of on-farm research or demonstration plots in corn fields across Nebraska. This year, nine teams signed up with five teams able to glean harvest data from their plots to complete the program.

The winning team from 2022 growing season was Aaron Fuchs and Braden Monke from the Arlington FFA Chapter with Kali Agler as their advisor. This team added supplemental sulfur to increase plant health. Through this trial they were able to show a way to increase available sulfur which can then be utilized within the corn plant which added test weight and slightly increased the yield of the corn crop by 2 bushels. Given current economic conditions, the sulfur paid for itself.

Receiving second place was the Platte River Kids 4-H Club with Andy Swanson as their Advisor. This 4-H club consisted of Kylin & Kassie Swanson, Alexis Cummings, Aubrynn Swanson, Braxton Kaiser, Brooklyn Kaiser, Chasity Mueller, Ella Powell, Ester Powell, Grayson Mottl, Hallie Mottl, Hayden Kloke, Isablaea Streff, Izabella Connealy, Jayden Cordell, Julia Streff, Justin Kucera, Kinley Mottl, Lane Mehaffey, Macey Mueller, Madison Moyer, Mia Beebe, Mollie Powell, Montana Mueller, Owen Kloke, Peter Moyer, Phillip Streff, Sam Beebe, Samantha Cummings, Spencer Cummings, Vanessa Cummings, Carter Vrana & Hudson Vrana. They used 32% UAN+ Thiosul through their irrigation systems for years as part of a way to 'spoon feed' nitrogen to their corn plants through multiple applications throughout the growing season to see if more efficiency could be gained. They looked at a different form of nitrogen in a liquefied AMS. Their trial seemed to indicate that the liquefied AMS was a superior nitrogen form in 2022. The yield of two sections of AMS were 12 bushels, and 23 bushels better than the check section. Pricing of the product is the most restrictive part of the study with given current prices, it still had a positive return on investment.

The third-place team was the Spradlin Farm Team with Dawson County 4-H'ers, Rieker & Mollie Spradlin and Amanda Spradlin as their sponsor. They observed the effects on yield and soil health using PrairieFood. In their test plot they had a side-by-side test of the same hybrid. They concluded from their study is that they didn't gain enough yield from applying a side dress fertilizer or from the PrairieFood application to have a positive



return on investment.

Other teams who completed their studies were from York County 4-H and the Cozad FFA Chapter. The Crop Science Investigation (CSI) Team from York consisted of Luke Otte, Kate Otte, Annah Perdue, Lane Perdue, Levi Mau, Marta Renner, Naomi Renner, Breckyn Hatfield, Conner Uffelman, Carly Uffelman, Hailey Uffelman, and Bridget Kavan with Jenny Rees as their advisor. Their test consisted of a randomized and replicated study with Pivot Bio with a full nitrogen rate and one with a reduced nitrogen rate.

The Cozad FFA team consisted of Bryant & Austin Feik with Alison Feik as their advisor. Their irrigated test looked at the affects of yield versus cover crop/erosion prevention. With the capability of trying 7 different options for cover crops they were able to see the bushels produced from being planted in those plots.

Other teams that participated but due to a variety of circumstances were unable to finish their project included: Fillmore Central FFA Chapter, Kornhusker Kids 4-H Club from Cuming County and the Sumner-Eddyville-Miller & Centennial FFA Chapters.

As a team, youth worked with an adult mentor throughout the process. Mentors can be extension faculty, ag teachers, or other qualified agronomy professionals.

Other awards handed out during the banquet held on UNL's East Campus included:

- The Extra Mile Award had a tie and went to both York County 4-H and the Spradlin Farm Team.
- The Ag Literacy Award was presented to the Arlington FFA Chapter.

This program will be lowering the age to 8 as of January 1st in 2023

Prizes for participation in this project include 1st place - \$1,000, 2nd place - \$500, 3rd place -\$250, "Extra Mile" Award \$250, Ag Literacy Award \$250 and \$50 for completion of the project. In addition, each team receives a crop scouting kit valued at over \$200, plot sign and the opportunity to engage with UNL agronomic professionals.

For more information about this program and to register in 2023, go to <https://cropwatch.unl.edu/youth/cornchallenge>. Registration is due March 15th. Contact Brandy VanDeWalle at brandy.vandewalle@unl.edu or (402) 759-3712 for details about this program.