

## Views from VanDeWalle

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### Innovative Youth Corn Challenge Contest 2023 Results

Since 2012, the Innovative Youth Corn Challenge has engaged 243 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, six teams signed up with four teams able to glean harvest data from their plots to complete the program.

The winning team from the 2023 growing season was the Crop Science Investigation (CSI) Team from York County consisting of Luke Otte, Kate Otte, Annah Perdue, Lane Perdue, Levi Mau, Simeon Mau, Conner Uffelman, Carly Uffelman, Hailey Uffelman, Breckyn Hatfield, Maverick Epp, and Laramie Epp with Jenny Rees as their advisor. This team decided to look at Pivot Bio. To do this, they worked with a local farmer who wanted to try Pivot Bio since last year's plot was hailed on. Their original plan was to do 3 treatments, a normal N rate, a reduced N rate, and a reduced N rate with Pivot Bio. However, due to the dry conditions the sidedress trip to establish the normal N rate plot was abandoned, resulting in 2 treatments. Their irrigated plot, which used 3 replications resulted in yields of:

- Reduced N check plot – 255 bushels at a cost of \$0 per acre
- Reduced N plot with Pivot Bio – 254 bushels at a cost of \$25 per acre.

Receiving second place was the Sumner-Eddyville-Miller FFA Team which consisted of Barton Beattie Jr., Preston Beattie, & Ryan Arbutnot with Bart Beattie as their sponsor. Their irrigated plot was in Dawson County. This team looked at a new trend in the industry which has seen a wave of biological products. Most biologicals the team has observed have been applied to the growing plant, and their study was an in-furrow product called Bio Armor, which was easy to apply and seemed to make sense to them that it would directly affect the plant. The plot had swine manure applied as a fertilizer source. Their irrigated plot, which used 7 replications resulted in yields of:

- Check plot – 250 bushels at a cost of \$0 per acre.
- Bio Armor in-furrow – 250 bushels at a cost of \$5 per acre.

The third-place team was the Arlington FFA team which included Aaron Fuchs, Wes Monke, & Ethan Hilgenkamp with their plot located in Washington County. Their project sponsor was Kali Agler. This team evaluated different products and methods of delivering phosphorus efficiently to a growing crop. They compared 4 variables, a no phosphorus



check, 100 lbs of MAP fertilizer, 100 lbs of MAP treated with Titan XC, , and 50 lbs of Rhizosob 7-34-0,. These treatments were applied on June 3rd with a dry spreader. Their dryland plot used 3 replications, with the final yields coming in at:

- Check – 205 bushels with \$0 additional cost per acre with a cost of production of \$4.11 per bushel.
- MAP – 211 bushels with a cost of \$43.50 per acre with a cost of production of \$4.21 per bushel.
- Titan XC – 209 bushels with a cost of \$46.03 per acre with a cost of production of \$4.26 per bushel.
- Rhizosorb – 202 bushels with a cost of \$31.00 per acre with a cost of production of \$4.32 per bushel

The other team who completed their study was the Exeter-Milligan-Friend FFA team which consisted of William Vyhnalek, Mason Vossler & Jacob Weber with Scott Vyhnalek and Brandon Vossler as sponsors and Amy Kohtz as their FFA advisor. Their plot was in Saline County. This team looked at the industry trend of modifying planters to get the best stand possible. To do this, they decided to use their local supplier that sells Precision Planting parts and go with their Furrow Force closing system compared to a standard OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) closing system from John Deere. Their irrigated plot, which suffered from a July 29th windstorm which caused up to 35% green snap, used 2 replications, with the final yields coming at:

- Furrow Force closing system - 190 bushels at a cost of approximately \$1000 per row.
- Standard OEM – 180 bushels with no additional cost per row.

Other teams that participated but due to a variety of circumstances were unable to finish their project included: Fillmore Central FFA Chapter, & the Kornhusker Kids 4-H Club from Cuming County. 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 Ag Literacy Award had a tie and went to both the Exeter-Milligan-Friend FFA Chapter and Arlington FFA Chapter. The Extra Mile Award was presented to the Arlington FFA Chapter. This program is for youth aged to 8-18 as of January 1st in 2024. 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 2024, go to <https://cropwatch.unl.edu/youth/cornchallenge>. Registration is due March 15th.

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