

HARVEST SEASON – A TIME FOR EVALUATION



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With harvest moving forward in full force in recent days, it is important to make careful observations on how corn and soybean yields were impacted by various pests and environmental conditions this growing season. This past year has been a challenging year with extreme shifts in weather, difficulty in getting crops planted if getting them planted at all, fertility issues and several pests showing up in both corn and soybeans.

In traveling around southeast Nebraska the past couple of months, I have seen several cornfields showing signs of nitrogen deficiencies. With all the rain this spring and summer, nitrogen was lost through leaching, runoff or denitrification in some cornfields. Tissue analyses of corn during the growing season and stalk nitrate tests at black layer in corn indicated many fields with deficient levels of nitrogen. Corn yields may be negatively impacted in these fields. Farmers who were able to apply nitrogen during the growing season had less issues with nitrogen deficient corn. It will be important to evaluate nitrogen management strategies for 2020 to reduce nitrogen losses and be as efficient as possible. With several fields being flooded or inundated by water this growing season, stalk rot may definitely be more prevalent. With high winds already this fall and more predicted, check fields for stalk rot and possible down corn and make these fields a priority for harvest. There were incidences of Southern corn rust, gray leaf spot and I believe some bacterial leaf streak was also identified in southeast Nebraska this year. Several farmers had their corn fields treated with fungicides this summer. The impact of fungicide application is important to evaluate to determine if the added cost increased corn yields. With the wet conditions experienced this growing season, fungicide application may have been an important tool to use in some fields, especially if it improved plant health and reduced the incidence of stalk rot. In evaluation of corn yields in southeast Nebraska, I am sure yields will be extremely variable, with some yields poorer than expected and excellent yields in other fields.

Soybeans had some challenges throughout the growing season in southeast Nebraska from early season on. The biggest challenge was getting the crop planted in a timely manner. Some farmers had isolated infestations of the thistle caterpillar, (larval stage of the Painted Lady Butterfly) early in the growing season when soybeans were defoliated by them, especially on some of the southern tier of border counties. Another defoliating insect also showed up, the garden webworm in a few fields in southeast Nebraska. There were still issues and problems with the Dectes stem borer in soybeans. If you had this pest, hopefully you are getting these fields harvested (ASAP) to reduce losses. The soybean gall midge is a relatively new pest that is showing up mostly in Saunders and Cass counties, but some fields in Otoe county have been infested. This pest will be a challenge as research is being conducted to determine the best management strategies to implement to reduce its impact. With raining conditions throughout the summer, a number of soybean fields showed signs of Sudden Death Syndrome (SDS) in 2019. If you had SDS this year, it is important to also check for SCN. Many times if SDS is present you will find SCN as well in your soil. There are tools available to manage the impact of these diseases. You may want to soil sample fields for SCN this fall and see if you have an infestation. Your local Extension office should have a supply of sacks to send your samples in to the University of Nebraska. Sample analysis is free due to funding from the Soybean Board. As you already know 2019 was extremely challenging for the crop producer. With new tools and technology hopefully you will be able to manage your crops with more precision and be more

efficient in 2020. If you have questions, need SCN bags, a soil probe or have fields you need sampled for SCN, contact our office at (402) 274-4755 or glesoing2@unl.edu.

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