Program Impact:

• Ninety-seven percent of NSFPP members indicate that considering all of the agricultural educational opportunities available to them they would rank the NSFPP "above average" or "the best".
• "It educates all of us on proper scientific methods for on-farm testing of production questions."
• "There is a positive image of the program because of the joint effort among extension, industry and agricultural producers to help improve agricultural profitability."

"From my starter fertilizer plots, I learned that 10-34-0 was as effective as a more expensive starter fertilizer. This has saved me $5/acre annually on 500 acres of corn for the last six years. This has been a savings of $15,000 for me."
— On-Farm Research Participant

"Since joining the program, we have adopted a no-till corn, no-till soybeans, and biosolids program. In tillage costs alone, we have saved $7-8/acre on 2,500 acres. I would recommend this program to anyone."
— On-Farm Research Participant

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2011 On-Farm Research
“Working with critical thinkers, farmers, and consultants is addictive and a formula for professional success.”
— On-Farm Research Participant

On-farm research education allows farmers to test production ideas in partnership with University faculty—receiving technical support from Extension and industry personnel while conducting their trials.

Farmers report their results at an annual winter meeting to which non-participating farmers and crop advisors are invited.

Participants note that farmer research is a very important means to improving the area’s agriculture. Farmers highly value the interaction with other participants. As one farmer said, “Working with critical thinkers, farmers, and consultants is addictive and a formula for professional success.”

“I was interested in the potential return of lime and fertilizers in the soil. I just didn’t want to throw a great deal of money out on the soil without feeling secure of a potential return. The NSF-GPP program provided me the academic and technical help to perform the study.”
— On-Farm Research Participant

The Research Process
• Meet with producers to determine their question(s)
• Private industry representatives typically involved
• Design research protocol
• Experimental layouts are paired comparisons and randomized complete block designs
• Comparisons are field size layouts—all work conducted with farmer’s equipment
• Growing season observations are documented
• Crop yield is measured using weigh wagons or yield monitors
• Meet with farmers to review their results and determine profitability of their comparison, then plan for the next growing season
• Facilitate data sharing among farmers
• Publish results

Documented Benefit

From “Will this work on my farm?” to “These are the results on my farm.” The on-farm research process is shared by faculty, industry professionals and farmers. Collectively, this process yields relevant and valued applied research data. Research data is shared among agriculturalists at regional forums and on the UNL Extension on-farm research website.

“With this group of producers, I trust the data. This is unbiased data collected from some very good producers in the region.”
— On-Farm Research Participant

An evaluation of 2006 farm research programs in the Southeast District revealed participating farmers improved their annual whole farm profitability by $2,370 in planting, $3,643 in tillage, $5,188 in soil fertility, and $3,161 in pest management systems, respectively.

All results from the on-farm research programs posted on the Cropwatch on-farm research website have been screened and reviewed by a team of UNL Extension Educators and Specialists. Statistical analysis is conducted on all research data. In many cases, the economics of the study results are also included.

http://cropwatch.unl.edu/web/farmresearch

“No other country has focused such attention on the practical (applied) dimension of education by extending and applying the knowledge base of our land-grant universities to the laboratories of real life where people live, work, develop and lead.”
—Wayne D. Rasmussen (1989) Taking the University to the People: Seventy-Five Years of Cooperative Extension

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