

News & Issues

Polymer buys field time

By JOHN VOGEL

A YEAR ago, we reported on the successes of Paul Almeter, Strykersville, N.Y., and Ron Souder, Mechanicsburg, Pa., with seed corn coated with Intellicoat, a temperature-controlled polymer. The seed protectant allows planting corn much earlier than normal in cold, wet soils — allowing water absorption by the seed once soil temperatures rise above 55 degrees, and restricting it again when they drop below 55.

Getting those first cornfields planted several weeks ahead of normal makes that many more days available during the spring rush. This year, Steve (Jr.) and Dan Gross of Cold Springs Farms, Manchester, Pa., discovered an even better reason to use the polymer-treated corn. “At \$4 an acre, it spreads our crop risks over a wider window and widens our harvest window,” reports Steve. “That’s a lot cheaper than buying a bigger planter. But maybe the biggest advantage is that it gives us more time for manure spreading.”

In late March, the Gross brothers minimum-tilled 90 acres of treated 100-day Roundup-ready corn also treated with Poncho 250. “We broke our 700-acre corn planting season into three windows over five weeks,” he adds. “That early-plant corn was waist-high when the rest of the crop was 3 to 6 inches tall. No frost damage. Some of our neighbors predicted we’d be replanting that corn.”



STEVE GROSS was impressed with this March-planted field that was ready for harvest in mid-September, averaging 160 bushels per acre.

It also reduced risk of hot weather pollination damage and having a whole corn crop shrivel by dry weather.

It gave them more time for manure hauling and managing spring details of the 1,800 acres of corn, soybeans, small grains and hay.

Harvest began in mid-August with some corn coming off as ear corn for early feed for the farm’s feeder calves.

By mid-September, the early-plant corn yielded 160 bushels, was harvested at 15% to 17% moisture and delivered for early-market premiums.

For 2005, Gross says that they expect to plant 150 acres of corn with the early-

plant technology.

“That way, we can get one farm out of the way early,” he concludes.

Key recommendations

Consider these tips from Almeter, Gross and Souder:

- Fields need to be in ready-to-plant condition before next spring.
- Stick with early-season hybrids having more cold vigor.
- Use hybrids with the flex-tear trait to ensure yield potential.
- Forget coated corn where you can normally early-plant into warm, well-drained soils.

They said it



“The early-planted corn was zone-tilled into wet soil, and was about 4 inches tall before an 8-inch deluge. The later-planted corn didn’t fare so well.”

— Paul Almeter, Strykersville, N.Y.

“The treated corn gave us a three-week-earlier start date for planting and a two-week-earlier start on harvest, making it easier to be more timely in both seasons.”

— Ron Souder, New Kingstown, Pa.



Where to go for ‘Intellicoated’ corn

NATARAJAN Balachander, vice president of research and development for Landec Ag, maker of the Intellicoat technology, reports nine seed companies are licensed to use the seed coating for 2005. Use of the technology has grown from 40,000 acres of corn in 2003 to a projected 100,000 acres in 2005.

Greatest growth in demand, he

reports, has been in the East and in Minnesota. Companies marketing seed in the Northeast include:

- Ag Venture
- Fielder’s Choice Direct
- Hubner
- UAP DynaGro

For more information, contact Landec Ag at (800) 241-7252, or visit the Web site: www.intellicoat.com.