

SF

July 2024

Successful Farming®

Seeds of Success

Unlock the potential within each seed. P. 16

Wheat yield

contest winners share strategies to push yields. P. 46

How David Hula grew 600-bushel corn. P. 25

4 tips for managing diseases this growing season. P. 41

Use technology to unlock water savings. P. 38

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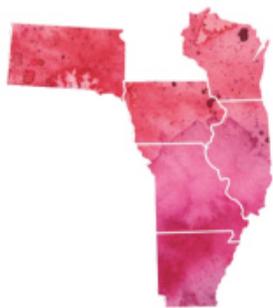
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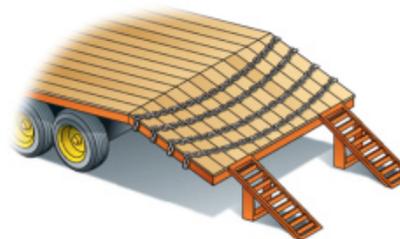
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HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL WITHIN

Eight hundred to 900 bushels per acre (bpa): That is the maximum yield potential when you plant corn in the spring.

That's what David Hula believes. While 600 bpa was assumed to be the maximum, the Virginia farmer challenged that when he set the world corn yield record last year with 623.8439 bpa.

This issue is dedicated to helping you find the potential within each seed you plant.

That starts with seed selection. On page 16, Agronomy Editors Chelsea Dinterman and Adrienne Held break down the factors to consider for corn and soybean seed selection. That list includes consistent performance, maturity groups and diversity, emergence ratings, ear flex, disease resistance, trait protection and rotation, and field environment and conditions. Wheat yield record winners detail their seed preferences on page 46.

Planting is the biggest key to maximizing yield. That sentiment is shared by several yield record holders, including Hula and the world record holder for soybeans, Alex Harrell. Hula details his planter setup on page 25, and you can read about Harrell's 206.7997 bpa soybeans in the May/June issue on page 54.

Mother Nature plays an indisputable role in yield potential. Large swaths of the Corn Belt went into planting this year under drought conditions. Farmers had been hoping

for rain, and Mother Nature responded with the 10th wettest spring on record, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for the Upper Midwest. That rain — likely more than most farmers wished for — brought drought relief. (The total percentage of drought coverage in the U.S. is the lowest it's been since 2020.) But it also brought

planting delays, flooding, storms, and the need for replanting.

While there's not much managing Mother Nature, **there is a lot you can do during the growing season to impact harvest.** This includes regular tissue and grid sampling to address nutrient deficiencies ("Growing 600 Bushel Corn" on page 25 and "Amber Waves of Grain" on page 46); making better use of

irrigation technology to maximize yield while reducing costs ("Unlock Water Savings" on page 38); and disease control ("Four Tips for Managing Disease" on page 41).

Here's to a successful growing season!

While there's not much managing Mother Nature, there is a lot you can do during the growing season to impact harvest.



Jessie Scott

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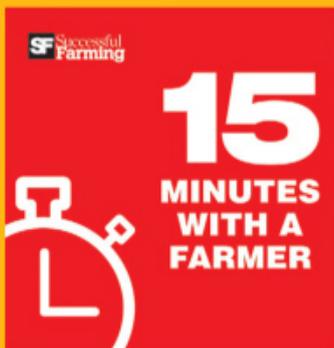
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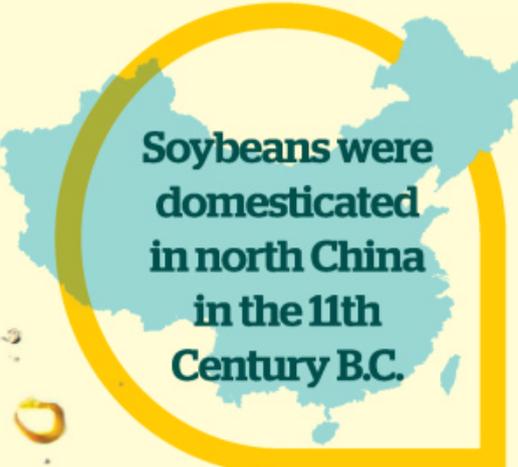


JOHN DEERE

Compiled by
Chelsea Dinterman
Assistant Agronomy
Editor

From SEED

TO OIL



Soybeans were
domesticated
in north China
in the 11th
Century B.C.

The average
soybean is
around
80% meal
and 20% oil.

The first use
of the word
“soybean” in U.S.
literature was in 1804.

A 60-POUND
BUSHEL OF
SOYBEANS
YIELDS ABOUT
11 POUNDS OF
OIL AND ABOUT
48 POUNDS OF MEAL.



The U.S. grew 87.45 million
acres of soybeans in 2022.



“IN A DOWN
ECONOMY ...
YOU NEED
MAXIMIZED
PRODUCTION.”

Jim Shertzer, head of branded marketing, Syngenta, p. 16

“Approaching these right
practices together in a
systems approach is our
biggest evolution.”

Wisconsin farmer Evan Schnadt on implementing no-till practices, p. 54

“**It’s best to
protect your
investment
with a preventative
application.**”

Tyler Harp, technical fungicide manager, Syngenta, p. 41

“The biggest
takeaway
for me is
adopting
**a split-
nutrition
application.**”

Alex Noll, 2023 Kansas Dryland division
wheat yield winner, p. 46

“**AND WHEN THE
PLANTER LEAVES
THE FIELD,
YOU’RE EITHER
BLESSED
WITH WHAT
YOU DID OR
CURSED
WITH WHAT
YOU DID...**”

Corn-yield record holder David Hula, p. 25



AG EXPORT JUMBLE

Biggest slump in sales to China since the trade war.

As increased Sino-U.S. tensions and rising competition from Brazil reshape the world market, Mexico and Canada have leapfrogged China as the top customers for U.S. food and ag exports. The USDA forecasts China to be the No. 3 export market this fiscal year, with its smallest purchases since 2020, when Beijing and Washington called a truce in the trade war.

The \$6 billion drop in sales to China, to \$170.5 billion, is a leading factor in the overall decline in ag exports for the second consecutive year. While the strong dollar supports food and ag imports to satisfy the American appetite for fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as wine, it also impedes export sales, USDA analysts say. With imports forecast at a high of \$202.5 billion, the agricultural trade deficit would double to a record \$32 billion. The deficit is expected to fall as the global economy catches up to the U.S. recovery.

“We’re facing these headwinds,” Sen. John Boozman (R.-Ark.) said in discussing trade with China. Trade is a simmering U.S. dispute with Beijing — President Biden

recently announced high tariffs on electric vehicles and batteries. Fiery opposition in farm country to foreign ownership of U.S. farmland frequently targets China.

Farm bill proposals would double USDA funding for export promotion through the Market Access Program and the Foreign Market Development program. In May the USDA awarded \$300 million to 66 organizations in the new Regional Agricultural Promotion Program, aimed at high-potential, nontraditional markets in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

China is projected to fall below Mexico and Canada as the third-largest U.S. agricultural market, the USDA said May 29 in a quarterly forecast. Exports to China would dip to \$27.7 billion, largely due to continued strong soybean and corn competition from Brazil. Compared with fiscal year 2023, year-to-date U.S. soybean and corn volume shipments to China were down 23% and 67%, respectively, the USDA forecast said, while Brazil’s shipments of those commodities surged.

Mexico, already the largest source of U.S. food and ag imports, would become the

largest export buyer this year, with record purchases of \$28.7 billion. Those are aided by strong, recent sales of sweeteners, rice, pulses, beef, and pork. Canada would be second, with a record \$28.4 billion.

The USDA will make its first forecast of fiscal 2025 ag trade and update its estimates for this year on Aug. 27.

In Case You Missed It

Animal Disease Biosecurity Is the Key Strategy to Quell H5N1

The USDA’s answer to the startling discovery of the H5N1 avian flu virus in dairy cattle is the advice it has given poultry producers, who have battled bird flu since early 2022: Employ strong biosecurity safeguards. “We’re really wanting [producers] to up their biosecurity,” says Mark Lyons, director of the USDA’s Ruminant Health Center. “Ultimately, that is the thing that gets us through.” USDA research in Michigan, with 24 infected herds in mid-June, said the virus spread among farms because of shared equipment and employees, as well as frequent visitors. Migratory waterfowl, often blamed for carrying the virus, were not a factor.

Agricultural Economy Commodity Prices Soften Farm Income Decline

Springtime price increases for corn, soybeans, and wheat brightened the agricultural sector outlook, according to the Federal Reserve’s “Beige Book,” a collection of reports from regional Fed banks. “Prospects for 2024 farm income increased slightly, though income is still expected to fall below its

2023 level,” the Chicago Fed said. The Kansas City Fed said prices for corn, soybeans, and wheat “increased slightly since April but remained weak, keeping profit opportunities narrow.” The Minneapolis Fed said conditions “remained weak amid some positive conditions,” including moderating production costs. The Chicago and Dallas Feds said bird flu in dairy herds was a cause for concern.

**Renewable Energy
Farmer Interest Grows
in Solar Leases**

One in five farmers have actively discussed leasing land for solar projects, and 6% have signed leases, according to a Purdue University survey. “Interest in leasing farmland for solar energy production continues to rise,” Purdue’s Ag Economy Barometer reported last month.

So do lease rates: 55% of interested farmers said they were offered at least \$1,000 an acre in annual rent, and 27% said they were offered at least \$1,250. The USDA says solar and wind farms occupied 423,974 acres, or 0.05%, of U.S. farmland, in 2020. The two forms of renewable energy generated 10.7% of U.S. electricity in 2020.

**Farm Technology
‘Nontrivial’ Losses From
Solar Storms**

The solar storms that knocked out GPS networks in early May could cost farmers thousands of dollars, Kansas State University professor Terry Griffin says. “For farms relying on GPS [i.e., navigation, automated row shutoffs, and variable-rate input applications], whole-farm losses may be nontrivial,” Griffin wrote on the farmdoc daily blog. “Intuitively, downtime during crucial planting windows is associated with yield penalties and reduced revenue,” he added. The next generation

of autonomy will use machine vision and artificial intelligence, he said, and not be as vulnerable.

**Dairy Emissions
Methane-reducing Feed
Ingredient for Dairy Cows**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved a feed ingredient that reduces methane emissions from lactating dairy cows by 30%. Sales will begin shortly, said Iowa-based Elanco Animal Health, which will market the product, named Bovaer, throughout North America. (It already is available in Canada and Mexico for beef and dairy cattle.) Bovaer suppresses the enzyme that produces methane in the rumen, the first and largest of a cow’s stomach compartments. Methane is 40% of U.S. agriculture’s greenhouse gas emissions. Dairy farmers could use carbon contracts to offset the cost of “a few cents a gallon” for the ingredient, Elanco said. 

**Upcoming
July**

• **8-10:** NCBA holds Cattle Industry Summer Business Meeting, San Diego

• **July 31-Aug. 2:** National Council of Farmer Cooperatives holds Washington Conference
August
• **13-15:** USDA trade

mission to Colombia
• **September**
• **16:** Agricultural Business Council of Kansas City holds Ag Outlook Forum



**Like the first
time you brought
it home.**

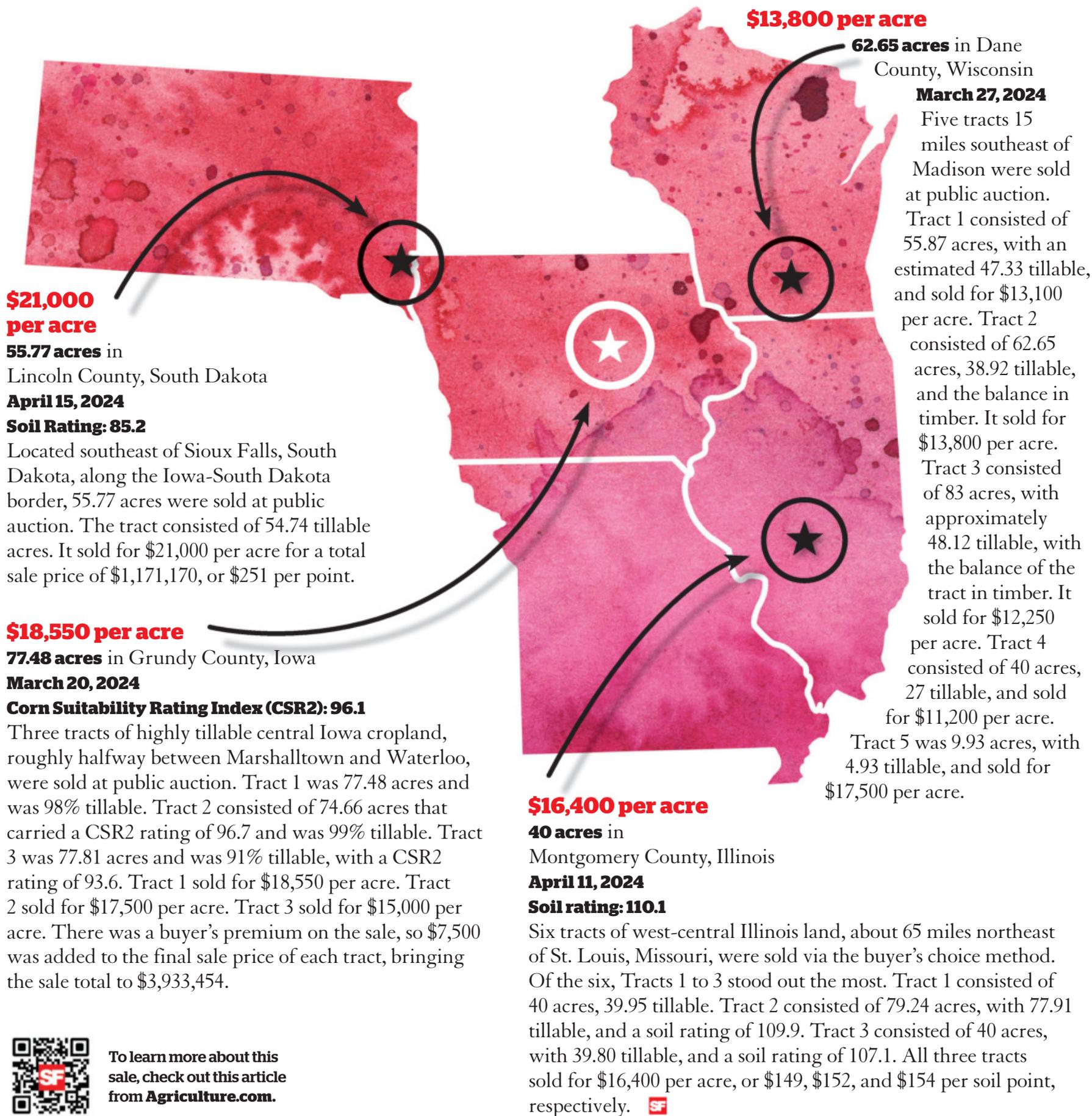
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By **Dave Price**,
Editor of American
Farmland Owner

Source: Peoples Co. appraisal database. The sales reported are auction results and do not represent the closing of those transactions.

3 TRACTS OF IOWA FARMLAND BRING NEARLY \$4 MILLION AT AUCTION



To learn more about this sale, check out this article from **Agriculture.com**.

Take the Guesswork Out of Decision Making



TARANIS
Moving the AcreForward™

Rachel Sindelar knows that technology isn't just a buzzword in agriculture—it's a game-changer for farmers looking to add yield without adding inputs.

Sindelar and her husband manage a diverse, 5,000-acre farming operation just outside of Howells, Nebraska, growing corn, soybeans, alfalfa, wheat, and rye. Rachel also owns and operates Maple Creek Seeds, LLC, helping the farmers she works with to find and select the best hybrids and varieties for the acres they farm.

Like every farming operation, Rachel and her husband work to stretch resources: manpower, inputs, and, especially, budget dollars.

“We use technology to save input costs.”

A straightforward and matter-of-fact statement from a farmer who doesn't have time to scout every acre or mince words about her operation's strategy for success.

In 2023, Sindelar and her husband implemented Taranis, the first and only crop intelligence solution to use the more than 500 million data points – collected by Taranis from the real fields of real farmers – to train its proprietary artificial intelligence model to detect, identify, quantify, and report the status of every Taranis-enrolled acre in leaf-level detail.



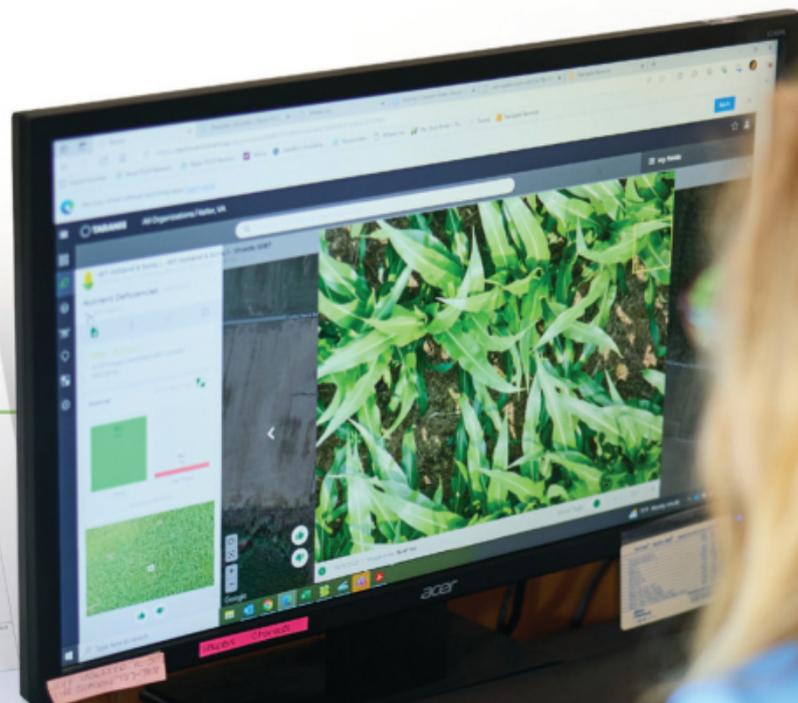
“ I was amazed at the level of detail Taranis could provide. We could see nutrient deficiencies, weed escapes, and other issues that we wouldn't have noticed through conventional scouting.

Taranis took the work out of in-season crop monitoring and added more management opportunities and timeliness to the pressures it identified. Taranis streamlined crop scouting for Sindelar; field conditions, location, and finding the time were removed from the crop management equation in 2023.

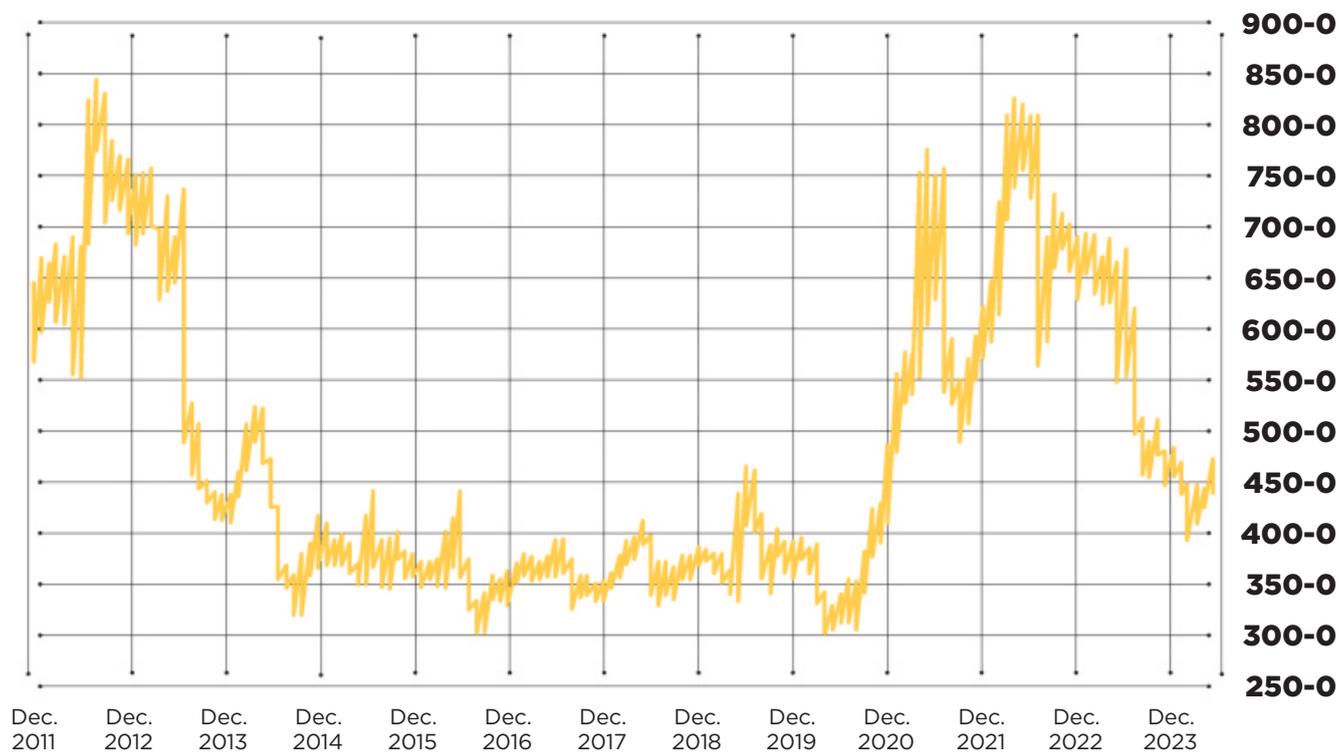
“Taranis makes it easier to check on fields remotely,” she says. “I can quickly look at my phone and see if there's a problem or if everything is fine. It saved us from walking extra acres, especially in fields that are farther away. We found nutrient deficiencies we wouldn't have, and we'll be able to manage those areas differently this season.”

Take the guesswork and legwork out of this season's decisions with Taranis.

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CORN MONTHLY CONTINUATION CHART



This is the monthly CBOT corn continuation chart. You can see the high, low, and close for each month back to 2012. You can see the major high (\$8.43), in September 2012, and the slide, as prices were in a major bear market until the major low (\$3.00), in April 2020. Most years the highs were recorded from April to June, and the lows were August to September. Note the different price patterns in 2012, 2020, and 2022.

To manage the recommendations I make for my customers, I built a decision-making process. For each year, I look at the different factors that could have an impact, then sketch out different scenarios to figure out the most likely successful time and price plan. It's a balance between analysis, probability, and risk management.

Let's look at how I am making decisions for 2024.

Here are four examples of factors to consider:

1. Today's price. What level are prices at? If the market is at \$4 for corn and \$8 for soybeans, then you have a lot less risk than if prices are over \$5 for corn and \$12 for soybeans.

2. Cash vs. futures. What is the alignment of the futures market and cash bids? In 2021, when the September corn bid was \$1.50 a bushel below the July bid, it was a no-brainer to get all the cash corn sold. For soybeans in October 2021, the cash bid was \$2.50 below the June bid. Cash prices were going to move a lot lower — it was just a question of when.

3. Rally reasons: If prices are rallying, is the rally demand-driven, as in 2021, ▶

JULY IS A DOUBLE-OR-NOTHING MONTH

Some years, you hit a home run; most years, you strike out.

By Al Kluis

Everyone who knows me sees me on the phone a lot. It's a valuable tool for learning what's happening in the field around the country (and around the world) — and also hearing what is happening in farm offices.

One call recently was from a long-time customer from the eastern Corn Belt. "I sold out my corn way too early in 2021 and 2022," he told me, "so in 2023, I held on into August." He didn't have to explain the result: Last year, holding on led to even worse results than selling too soon did in the previous two years.

I admitted that 2022 had surprised me, when corn prices were that strong as long as they were. I had not expected corn futures to stay above \$7 into September. That year, farmers who harvested corn in September and sold it right off the combine ended up with the best marketing results.

Then, in 2023, we wrapped up cash corn and soybean sales in June, and had 40% of

the crop sold ahead for harvest delivery. When prices moved lower into October, those were profitable hedges to deliver on.

What about 2024? My caller asked me the big question: "How can I manage my late-summer grain sales better this year?"

Every year, a different combination of fundamentals shapes the grain markets — and timing. Most years, the patterns and timing are similar. And yes, I still believe in the old "seasonal price" patterns (e.g. the best time to sell corn is when you are planting it). But I am also realistic: Each year can be completely different. I don't bet the farm that my seasonal price pattern will work every year. That is the "risk management" part of the equation.

That unpredictability is why I like to look at, and even draw charts of, different scenarios each year. I keep multiple sets of charts, with different studies on each chart. They are basically simulations showing me what would happen under different conditions.

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SOYBEAN MONTHLY CONTINUATION CHART



This is the monthly CBOT soybean continuation chart. You can see the high, low, and close for each month back to 2012. You can see the major high (\$17.93), in September 2012, and the slide into 2019, when nearby futures bottomed in April 2019 at \$7.80 per bushel. Prices went much higher into 2022. But note that the seasonal highs were usually recorded April to June, with the lows recorded August to October. The years this did not work were 2012, 2019, and 2020.

Note: The risk of loss in trading futures and/or options is substantial, and each investor and/or trader must consider whether this is a suitable investment. Past performance — whether actual or indicated by simulated historical tests of strategies — is not indicative of future results. Trading advice reflects good-faith judgment at a specific time and is subject to change without notice. There is no guarantee that the advice given will result in profitable trades. •

when China kept buying more and more corn and soybeans? Usually, demand-driven market rallies are orderly, and prices can move higher for longer than you think.

4. Rally reasons: Are prices rallying because of low supply or some other scare? Those rallies can end abruptly. Think of 2012, when the major drought south of Interstate 80 sent prices soaring. The market peaked right before the corn and soybean harvest and then collapsed lower into the fall of 2013.

So — how should you manage your cash marketing decisions this year?

This year, the timing of the highs will be impacted by how late the markets bottomed this spring. Instead of an October 2023 harvest low, corn and soybeans bottomed out in late February 2024. This, and the fact that we are in an election year, suggest a high will come later than usual. (For more on how price patterns may differ in election years, see my column on page 12 of the January 2024 issue.)

In 2023, we came into the fall harvest with 40% of the 2023 crop forward sold. At this time, we recommend that you have at least 80% to 90% of your 2023 crop sold. The futures and basis risks are so great that we are not willing to hold very much cash corn and soybeans into late July and August. I have often watched basis bids widen out during

any July/August rally in the futures market. That can be very frustrating for farmers holding on to cash corn and soybeans.

Think about some different scenarios that could happen in the markets, and think about the risk of holding on to your cash grain. If you don't have a plan, you are taking on a lot of risk for your farm operation. Here are some choices you can make:

- **To manage your futures risk** you can hedge the futures or buy puts. However, if you have a good basis, then it makes more sense just to sell the cash.
- **To manage the basis risk** you can fix the basis below the September futures and wait to see if weather problems develop and the September futures take off.
- **If you are convinced that futures have to go higher** then sell the cash corn and soybeans and buy some at-the-money call options. I am very concerned this year that if (and that is a big "if") futures markets rally in July, then your basis will go in the tank.
- **Bottom Line.** Looking at cash prices in July over the last 10 years, the two years you made a lot more money did not offset the eight years when corn and soybean prices fell. My research shows you need to stay consistent with your plan each year. Often it is better to hold the last 10% of your crop with call options than to hold the grain in the bin. 

Al Kluis

Commodity Trader

Al Kluis has been trading grain futures since 1974. Sign up for a free trial to his daily morning email and weekly



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BRENT JOHNSON

This Iowa farmer is in his second term as president of the IFBF.

By **Noah Rohlffing**, Digital Content Editor
noah.rohlffing@agriculture.com

Born into farming and drawn back to the family farm in Manson, Iowa, after years in college and in the workforce, Brent Johnson has found his groove as president of the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation.

Though he wanted to stay on his family's farm, Johnson's parents encouraged him to get an education, which led to an agronomy degree from Iowa State University. He has also started an independent crop consulting business.

After he was elected to a second term in December 2023, Johnson spoke with Successful Farming about his education and how it has helped him advance his family farm, and how he has adjusted to being an Iowa agricultural leader.

SF: Has your degree in agronomy helped you during your time as a full-time farmer?

BJ: I think a lot of my agronomy training along with experiences that I've had in the professional world have really helped me to hone in where some fields need to be pushed further yet to maximize production. Identifying areas that are more sensitive and need a little more care, I've learned to either pull back some inputs or employ different

technologies. Every field is different. Every part within every field is different. My agronomy management background helps to fine-tune fields down into a subfield. What I've done in my past has helped us to modernize the farm.

SF: Would you encourage farmers to get more formal education, if they can?

BJ: I think it's been tremendously helpful. I was that high school kid that all I wanted to do was farm. I didn't care what it was — that's what I wanted to do. It was my dad's persistence in getting an education — going somewhere else, getting some other experiences first — that I think really helped my ability to be a better farmer today. Perspective and perception are key to this. To have your backyard be your entire world isn't always the healthy thing to do [laughs]. I've had the experiences of literally traveling

the world and seeing different models of agricultural implementation, different generations moving through different perspectives. To bring that back home and understand that Iowa is a unique place in the world and grow an appreciation for what that is — even though every farmer in Iowa understands what corn, soybeans, pork, and beef mean to the state of Iowa.

That's a really small neighborhood on a global scale.

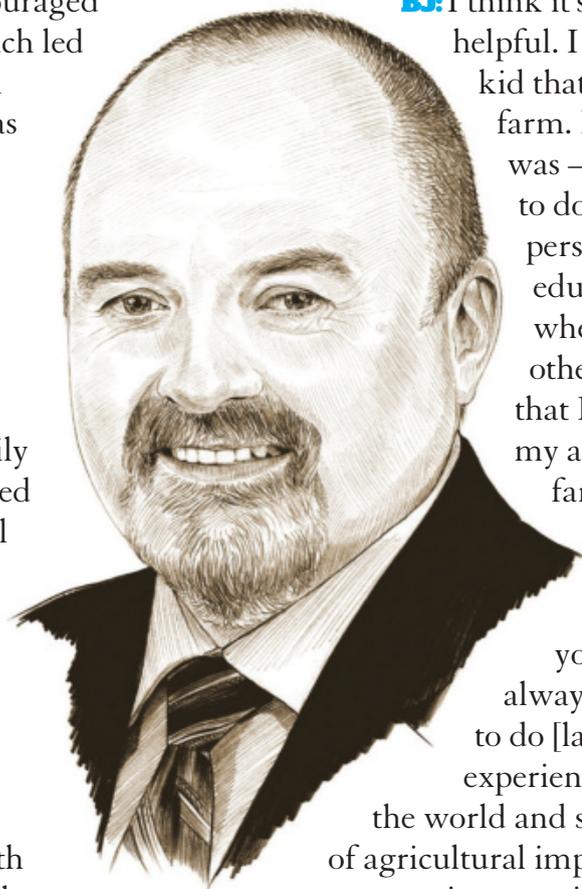
SF: How have you dealt with drought in the past couple of growing seasons?

BJ: We have been lucky. One thing that I think has helped: Some of the management

practices that we've implemented over the last few years have built in some resiliency within our soils. It's created a larger buffer to be able to absorb and retain water [and] cycle nutrients. Everybody talks about the advancements of genetics and the tools that we've all got available to us, and that is 100% true. What's also true — and doesn't get talked about as much — is how much progress farmers have made over the last handful of years in learning, understanding, adopting, and adapting their practices and the way that they engage their operations.

SF: What have you been most proud of in your first couple of years as a full-time farmer and president?

BJ: I really give a lot of credit to the folks who are willing to trust me to stick both pieces together in my life. It's not always easy, but I think I'm a better farmer because of it. I think I'm a better president because I'm an active farmer. It was never my goal to replace being a farmer. I was able to get the vision forward to the staff that I am going to continue to be a farmer full-time, and I want to serve as our members' president full-time as well. It took a little work, but everybody's been so supportive. I couldn't be more proud of everybody who's committed in all these relationships to make sure the priorities are the priorities on both sides of that equation. **SF**



Background: Brent Johnson farms corn and soybeans in Calhoun County, Iowa, with his wife, LuAnn; son, Matt; and daughter-in-law, Rebekah. He has another daughter named Kaeli.



Calhoun County, IA
Founded: 1851
Population: 9,927 (2022)

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To maximize yield potential in every field, consider several factors when selecting seed.

By Chelsea Dinterman and Adrienne Held

SEED SELECTION weighs on farmers' minds every season. Seed cost represents 12% of total corn production costs and 10% of total soybean production costs, according to Purdue University's "Crop Cost and Return Guide." This number illustrates the significant risk a farmer's seed decision makes to the overall operation.

But farmers may now make decisions differently because of the

changes in the economy, says Jim Shertzer, head of branded marketing with Syngenta. "In a down economy, you're going to need the best out of every acre, and you need maximized production," he says.

Maximizing yield and maximizing profit are not always the same. When selecting seed products, farmers should evaluate their economic and agronomic conditions, and determine which priorities are most important.



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CORN SEED SELECTION

Hybrid selection is one of the most important corn management decisions. The genetic yield potential of different corn hybrids varies greatly, directly impacting yield, as well as input costs.

“The right hybrid, the right situation, the right farm is of utmost importance,” says Craig Moore, corn lead with Beck’s Hybrids. “The driving factor behind hybrid selection should be from a regional perspective on where a grower is located, down to the soil type on that specific farm. Both play a crucial role in the outcome and success of each product.”

EMERGENCE SCORES

The early-season seedbed can be inhospitable for corn seeds and seedlings. Scott Walker, corn product marketing manager with Corteva, says growers should pay attention to emergence ratings when making corn decisions, especially when planting early. “Emergence scores are key,” he asserts. “You want to make sure that if [a seed] has a lower emergence score, keep it in the shed a couple of weeks longer until you have a favorable long-term forecast.”

Walker also advises considering seed treatments to protect stands from disease and insect pests, particularly in the early season. “The combination of genetics and seed treatment is something growers need to look at,” he says.

DIVERSITY REDUCES RISK

Just as a diverse financial portfolio helps spread investment risk, selecting a diverse mix of hybrid maturities can reduce yield risk. “There’s not a perfect hybrid out there; they each have strengths and weaknesses,” says Brent Tharp, technical product manager for Wyffels Hybrids. “If you only plant one or two hybrids, and they share a common risk, and that risk factor hits, you’re really paying the price. So, it’s good to spread that risk over different genetics.”



Brent Tharp

A range of relative maturities also reduces risk. “The rule of thumb is to plant 50% in your target maturity, and then plant 25% two to four days later in your relative maturity, and 25% two to four days earlier,” Tharp suggests.



CONSISTENCY IS KEY

The key to picking hybrids that perform well is observing documented consistency from yield performance in test plots. Jeff Coulter, Extension specialist at the University of Minnesota, recommends studying

yield trials at various locations. “Gather results from as many sources of information as possible and as many trials as possible,” he says.

Evaluate a hybrid’s performance relative to the trial’s average yield.

Coulter recommends hybrids that consistently yield in the top 20%.

“Hybrids can then be further filtered for traits important to your operation, such as resistance to foliar diseases in a continuous-corn situation,” he concludes.

CONSIDER DISEASE RESISTANCE

When weighing hybrid disease tolerance, it's important to consider historical disease trends in specific fields or regions. For example, acres in continuous corn, where diseases overwinter in residue, require stronger disease tolerance.

In recent years, tar spot has become a disease of focus. "In northern Indiana, tar spot is an evolving disease," says Jason Harmon, technical agronomist with Bayer. "We've seen the worst of it in 2021, and we know what it can do. We're advancing hybrids that have better tolerances to tar spot and utilizing those in the areas with tar spot pressure."

Also consider applying fungicide. If that is not a likely option, look for hybrid disease packages with above-average disease ratings.

"Are farmers willing to utilize a fungicide? Can they get it applied in a timely manner? Or is there an area they can't apply fungicide or don't want to?" Harmon advises. "Then, we can adjust to choose a hybrid that will be able to give us better tolerances against those diseases."



Jason Harmon



UNDERSTANDING EAR FLEX AND MANAGEMENT

Corn ear type can be determine (fixed size), flex (variable size), or some variation. Flex-ear hybrids

can adjust ear size, depending on growing conditions. Understanding how a hybrid flexes (girth, length,

kernel) can impact management decisions, say Kevin Gale and Josh Johnston, agronomists for AgriGold.

"First, we place the hybrid to match genetics and soil type; then, we can implement management strategies," Johnston says. "For example, if the hybrid flexes by kernel depth, that's at the end of the life cycle. In this scenario, management needs to be focused on that segment of the life cycle to get the most potential out of the hybrid."

"If an ear flexes by length," Gale adds, "that product sets up over a long period of time from about V8 to tassel. Whether we're talking about ear length, girth, or kernel depth, those management decisions need to be made ahead of time to put ourselves in a good position during that segment."

TALK ABOUT TRAITS

Insect trait protection technology can help reduce the risk of insect-feeding damage such as stalk and root lodging, dropped ears, and yield loss. To protect most corn production areas, identify the possible insect pests and select the proper traits for control.

There are lots of options, Bayer's Harmon assures.

"I like to look at the hybrid first and then the

trait, unless I'm going into a situation where I know what pest I have to fight against," he says. "If I know I have rootworm concerns, I instantly start making sure I'm looking for that trait, and then the hybrid."

Knowing your insect pressure helps in hybrid selection, says Tharp.

"I encourage growers to dig roots regardless of the trait in some fields, just to make sure you

know what's going on from a rootworm perspective," he says, "and if the traits that you're planting are holding up."

Tight margins make this more important; making an uninformed decision can cost you, Tharp says.

"Sometimes we do not need a fully traited package hybrid," he notes. "We can get by with lesser traits, which are lesser costs."

CONSIDER FIELD ENVIRONMENT

When deciding on seed, it may be tempting to pick a variety with the highest yield potential, but keep other factors in mind.

“We start with the environment,” says Marc Hoobler, northern region agronomy lead at BASF. “We don’t start with yield, because yield is not predictable.”

The Corn Belt has faced several years of heat and drought pressure, making weather tolerance an important factor. For fields with less water-holding capacity, consider a drought-tolerant variety that builds yield along the main stem.

Disease and pest

pressures also can rob yields. Tolerant and resistant varieties offer the best control.

“People joke that we don’t have the control over yield [in soybeans] that we do in corn,” says Andrew Penney, a technical agronomist for Bayer Crop Science. “There are a lot of characteristics and traits for disease and insect resistance that can impact yield, so understanding resistance is very important.”

Detailed field history records can help align seed packages with the right environment, ensuring yield protection.

Overusing unnecessary traits can have negative consequences.

“We only want to use a trait when we need it,” says Tanner Johnson, a member of the American Soybean Association board of directors. “We’re going to build resistance if we abuse those traits. We’re just trying to stay a half step ahead of Mother Nature.”



CONSIDER MATURITY GROUPS

Planting and harvest goals can help guide maturity-group decisions. Usually, the highest yield potential belongs to a long-season variety.

Selecting several maturity groups can allow early harvesting of some fields, limiting risk and making harvest easier.

“After soybeans reach full maturity [R8], they aren’t going to get any better sitting out in the field,” Josh Gunther, product lead for Burrus Seed, says in a blog. “If we can vary our harvest windows by switching maturities, it can help us not only capture more yield but also have better-quality grain.”

While maturity groups are important, flexibility is key. In many cases, factors such as herbicide tolerance are more important when looking to maximize yields.

Soybean Innovations

Seed companies have announced the next generation of soybean innovations. While some are imminent, others will take longer to hit the market.

Pioneer’s Z-Series Soybeans

With a full launch expected in 2025, Pioneer’s Z-Series is designed to offer significant yield advantages, heightened disease protection, and substantial herbicide traits.

“Z-Series soybeans represent the next step forward for soybean farmers, with a generational leap in yield

potential and agronomic performance over any soybean lineup Pioneer has ever introduced,” says Liz Knutson, Pioneer U.S. soybean marketing lead.

Pioneer expects Z-Series, featuring exclusive genetics, to launch with 50 varieties, and plans to introduce more. Varieties range from relative maturity 00.3 to relative maturity 6.4.

Bayer’s Soybean Pipeline

Bayer has extensive plans for its soybean offerings. XtendFlex products, with new genetics and upgraded

germplasm, will be available for the 2025 season.

Also underway is preparing for the next generation of herbicide-tolerant traits. HT4 beans are expected to hit the market in 2027, pending regulatory approval.

“What’s unique about HT4 is it brings tolerance to five different herbicides — glyphosate, dicamba, glufosinate, 2,4-D, and mesotrione,” says Wes Hays, North America soybean product management lead at Bayer.

HT4’s release is expected to be closely followed by the release of HT5, adding

tolerance to PPO herbicides.

Wilbur-Ellis FORTUS

Wilbur-Ellis Agribusiness plans a full launch of its FORTUS brand soybeans in 2025, offering the Enlist E3 trait in 12 varieties in all maturity groups.

“These new varieties provide our customers with high-quality, differentiated genetics and expand their options for controlling problem weeds throughout the entire growing season,” says Tracie Gogolin, vice president of seed technology.

The soybeans align well with growing conditions and agronomic needs common throughout Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, and Ohio.

ROTATE TRAITS

Knowing each variety's tolerance for disease is helpful, but knowing the source of that tolerance can offer even greater returns. For example, 95% of soybean varieties use plant introduction (PI) 88788 for soybean cyst nematode (SCN) resistance. But that is becoming less effective. A 2019 Iowa State University study found switching to a Peking-based variety could offer a 22 bushels-per-acre (bpa) yield increase and \$200 more per acre. Conducting soil tests for SCN levels can also offer

insight into the best varieties for control.

Consult with an agronomist or seek out company seed guides to better understand the technologies each seed variety offers.

Rotating seed traits can also help increase the longevity of herbicides in the face of weed resistance. "Take advantage of all the options industry partners have offered farmers by rotating different modes of action with herbicide or rotating traits," the Soybean Association's



Johnson says.

When rotating to soybeans, herbicide trait considerations also are important. Avoiding the same herbicide package can also allow flexibility in controlling volunteer corn.

STAY INFORMED ON LEGISLATION

Increased scrutiny of herbicides, pesticides, and other inputs could add extra difficulty to seed decisions. Changes to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) registration process could put popular options at risk.

"Knowing what traits are going to be available and permissible for us to plant, as well as what herbicides we'll be able to spray is key," the Soybean Association's Johnson says.

While dicamba was a hot-button issue earlier this year, all agricultural chemicals will be reviewed as their registrations expire. The EPA's 2022 Endangered Species Act Workplan requires significant data to ensure compliance with the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). For many companies, that data isn't available, putting chemical availability at risk.

When looking to 2025, consider having a backup plan if certain chemicals are unable to be applied.

WORK WITH TRUSTED ADVISERS

Using their expertise and field records, trusted advisers, such as local agronomists and seed dealers, can provide thoughtful recommendations. Some companies have released dealer-facing software to ease seed selection.

For example, BASF's xarvio Field Manager uses field data and modeling experience to build input recommendations. The program evaluates variety characteristics and matches them to field environments.

"We know that farmers don't want to dive into endless amounts of data," says Justin Gayliard, head of North America digital farming at BASF. "They want to be out there farming. The xarvio Field Manager program is a holistic agronomic enablement platform. It's helping the agronomic adviser to be more efficient and to really utilize years of research and trial data to maximize that yield for the grower."

SOYBEAN SEED SELECTION

Despite rising demand for soy and soybean oil, many deem soybeans an afterthought to corn. But consider soybean variety selection as critically as corn hybrid selection.

"A lot of growers have the mentality that we plant soybeans to get back to corn," says Chris Conner, general manager of Waters Farm Supply in Cumberland, Iowa. "There's a ton of yield loss, just because farmers pick up a tender full of beans, all one number, and plant them wherever. We need to think of beans the same way as we do corn."

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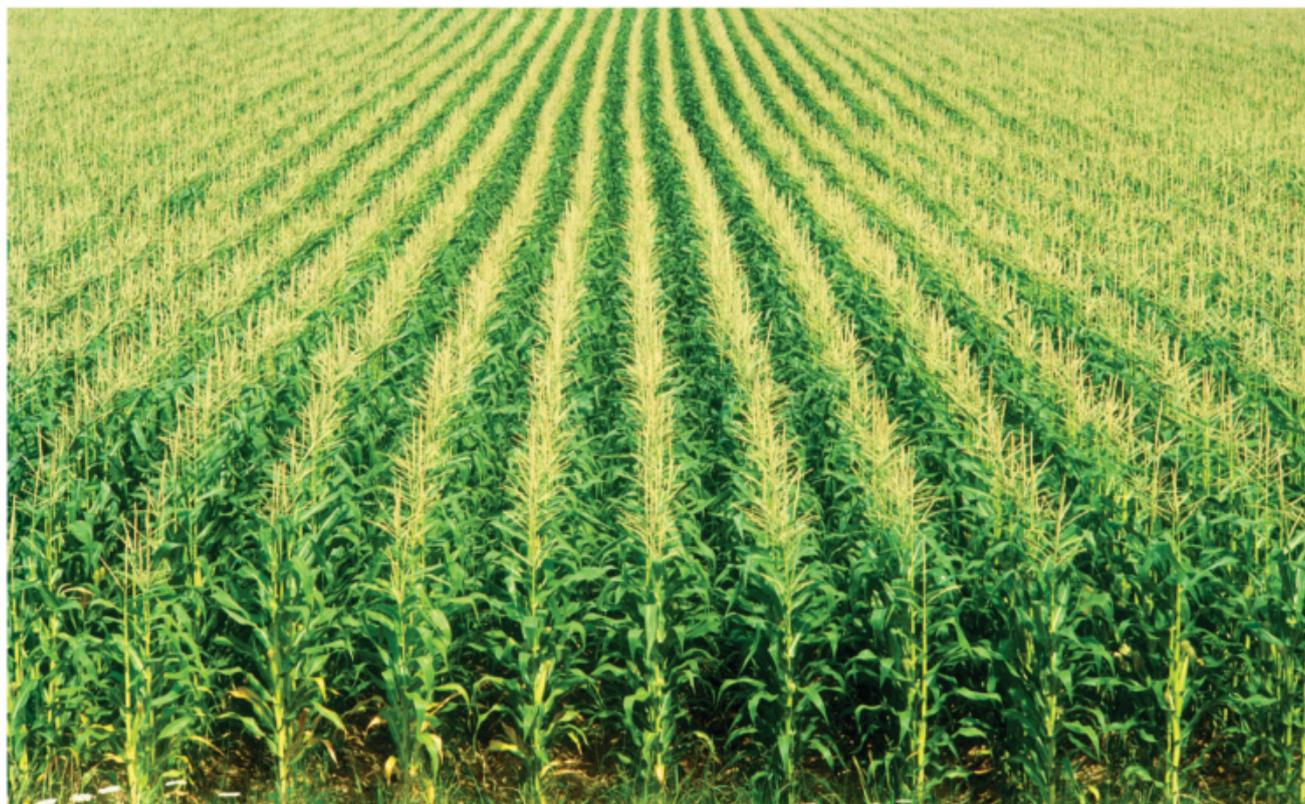
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GROWING 600-BUSHEL CORN

How David Hula broke his own record by more than seven bushels.

By **Bill Spiegel, Natalina Sents Bausch,**
and **Chelsea Dinterman**

David Hula is no stranger to stratospheric corn yields. His 623.8439 bushels per acre (bpa) yield in 2023 is the fifth time he's set the world corn yield record, and his 12th time winning the National Corn Yield Contest.

He's not achieving massive yields on super-fertile, jet-black land. Instead, Hula farms on sandy-loam fields in Charles City County, Virginia, southeast of Richmond.

"Everyone thinks we have a magic piece of dirt, but we don't. We've had success on seven different fields and three different counties," Hula says. "It takes a team of folks and God's favor."

Laying the Foundation

Hula's quest for top yields begins 18 months before harvest, when he's planting the previous year's crop, and field testing new technologies and theories. In 2018 he began using Precision Planting's Conceal starter fertilizer system, which places up to two different products on his John Deere 1770NT planter. Using Conceal, Hula places starter

fertilizer 3 inches away from the row, 1 ¼ to 1 ½ inches deep.

"I'm adamant about 3 inches away because I'm applying 66 pounds of nitrogen, 33 pounds of phosphorus, and some sulfur, zinc, boron, and Accomplish with the starter," he says. "When our planter leaves the field, every acre, whether contest or not, is treated the same with the starter, as well as in our furrow system, which includes Relay and Ethos XB."

He soil-samples each field in 1-acre grids after soybean harvest. Correcting pH is a priority; if necessary, fields receive an application of lime. He applies potash for the entire crop rotation before planting corn, using a Deere 800R spreader and a SoilWarrior strip-tiller. The SoilWarrior strip-tiller allows a farmer to apply a blend of dry products, including nitrogen, sulfur, monoammonium phosphorous (MAP), Titan XC, humic acid, and micronutrients in a 7-inch band, while making an ideal seedbed for corn.

Hula's conversion to strip-till six years ago is a change from a long-term never-till system. However, strip-till allows nutrients

to be placed in a narrow band, six to eight weeks before planting.

By using variable-rate technology for precise fertilizer placement and only applying fertilizer in the field's tilled area, Hula can feed the crop exactly where it is growing. This doesn't necessarily mean he uses less fertilizer; it just helps ensure efficiency. This way, every dollar he spends on crop nutrition precisely fuels performance.

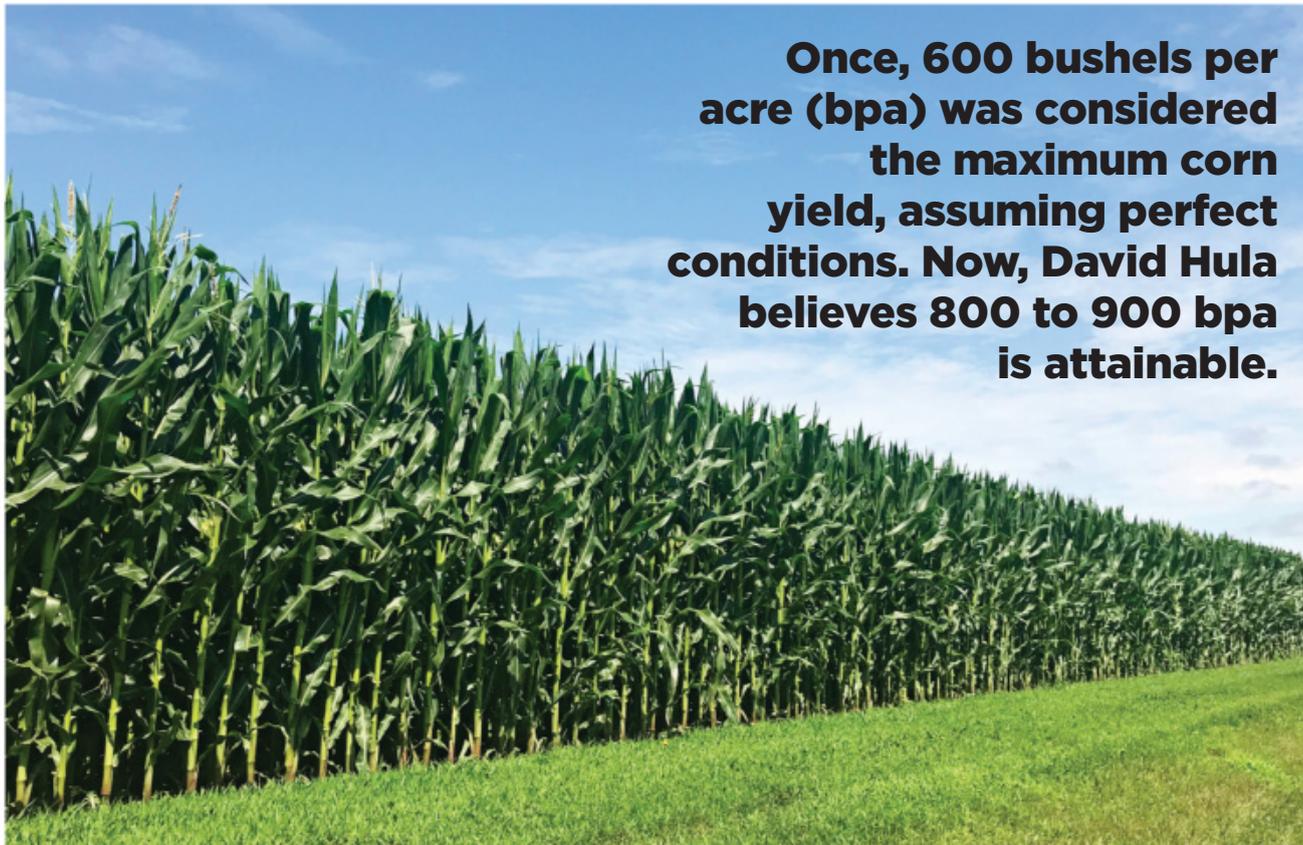
Choosing Hybrids

Each year, Hula meets with his Pioneer representatives to study agronomic data for hybrids suited for his environment. Yield is foremost, but he also prioritizes emergence, then plant health (or stay-green ability). He also prefers hybrids that he says flower earlier than relative maturity. For instance, he chooses a 112-day hybrid that pollinates like a 109-day hybrid, which gives a longer grain fill period.

Hula set his 2023 yield record with Pioneer's P14830VYHR hybrid. This new hybrid, from the company's freshman class of corn products, is a switch after Hula's long history of high yields with P1197.

During Pioneer's research and development process, P14830 showed high yield potential, high test weights, and strong plant health. While some hybrids are best suited for specific regions, P14830 shows potential to be adopted across the country.

"What is unique about this hybrid is its wide fit," says Adam Theis, corn portfolio ▶



Once, 600 bushels per acre (bpa) was considered the maximum corn yield, assuming perfect conditions. Now, David Hula believes 800 to 900 bpa is attainable.

lead for Pioneer. “One parent comes from a more Western-focused breeding program; the other parent comes from a more Eastern-focused breeding. By doing that, we’re seeing those wide agronomics available.”

Planting Considerations

For his contest fields, Hula aims to drop from 38,000 to 54,000 seeds per acre.

His planter has undergone dramatic changes in the last few years. He installed Deere’s Performance Upgrade Kit, which included the ExactEmerge planter units, which have the high-speed bowl meters and brush belt seed tubes; and the ExactRate liquid delivery system for the starter application. Those changes have improved singulation, as well as consistent, even emergence, necessary for high yields.

“If corn comes up within six, seven days and so many growing degree units (GDUs) from the time we plant with even emergence, then we know we have an opportunity to do something special,” he says. “We got that picket-fence-row stand.”

The planter, Hula reckons, is the biggest key to maximizing yield. Every row of the planter needs to be working properly, whether it’s ensuring seed-to-soil contact and accuracy or getting fertilizer to the right location. It may require waiting for the right

field conditions and stopping to check planter performance in the field.

Hula uses flag emerging trials on some corn annually to document the success across the entire planter, ensuring every row contributes equally. Hula says planters should be inspected during offseason and at the start of planting. Routine checks throughout the day during planting can catch issues early.

“I only get one time to do it right. And when the planter leaves the field, you’re either blessed with what you did or cursed with what you did, and you get to live with it for the rest of the season,” he says.

Planting speeds on contest fields can range from 4 to 7 mph, depending on seed size and shape, as Hula monitors singulation.

In-Season Crop Protection

For years, Hula has pulled leaf tissue samples from his corn every Monday. From those, he’s built a large dataset that guides him as to when the crop is ready for required, specific nutrients. He applies micronutrients, potash, nitrogen, sulfur, and boron in-season, with foliar sprays. Based on crop needs determined from the tissue tests, he sidedresses with EZ-Drops. Later in the season he adds additional nutrients with EZ-Drops or with his center pivot system, a process known as fertigation.

On contest fields, Hula typically applies three fungicide passes, with a goal of keeping plants green as long as possible, maximizing kernel development.

Hula has observed the significant impact kernel weight has on final yields. “Imagine the yield difference if you harvest 56-pound corn versus 65-pound corn,” he says. “Having the same number of kernels per ear but a difference in ear weight — that can be big.”

Putting it Into Practice

600 bpa was thought to be the maximum corn yield, assuming perfect conditions. Now, however, Hula believes 800 to 900 bpa is attainable.

“If that’s the case and our average is 170 bushels per acre, we’re nowhere near where the potential is,” he says.

With up to nine passes through the field coupled with relying on irrigation, pushing the average corn acre to Hula’s award-winning yields isn’t realistic. However, the insights he learns from his contest fields can serve as a guide.

“I don’t mind doing things on a few acres to see what works,” Hula says. “In these plots, we’re learning a lot. The things that do work we’ll implement on other acres. When they work there, then it becomes a standard procedure for our operation. And despite all the things we do and think we have control over, it’s important for us to realize that we need God to bless the seeds we sow.”

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Year	Make	Model	Loc.	Price	Bale Count	Features	Auctioneer
2020	Case IH	RB565	IA	\$22,500	4,943	1,000 RPM PTO, net wrap, bale kicker, moisture tester	Big Iron
2021	New Holland	Roll-Belt 560	KS	\$24,800	6,379	1,000 RPM PTO, 7-foot wide pickup, spring/hydraulic bale tension, feeder-gauge wheels, bale kicker	Big Iron
2020	Vermeer	605 N Select	IA	\$41,000	2,481	DCF wide pickup, E-link Pro display, 1,000 RPM PTO, hydraulic lift pickup, net wrap, bale ramp/kicker	Big Iron
2021	New Holland	Roll-Belt 560	NE	\$43,510	2,511	1,000 RPM PTO, three auxiliary hydraulics, power windrow pickup raise/lower, twine or net wrap, bale kicker, monitor	Big Iron
2022	John Deere	560M	NE	\$44,250	5,280	1,000 RPM PTO, power windrow pickup raise/lower, net wrap bale wrap, bale monitor	Big Iron
2021	John Deere	560M	MN	\$45,250	2,327	1,000 RPM PTO, hydraulic pickup raise/lower, CoverEdge surface wrap, mega wide pickup, variable core kit, hydraulic bale tension, monitor included	Big Iron

MAKING HAY WHILE THE SUN SHINES

Round baler inventory and prices fall into predictable patterns.

By Karen Jones, Machinery Executive Editor
karen.jones@agriculture.com

Round baler supplies, like many machinery categories, have leveled out in the past year as production and trading cycles return to more predictable pre-pandemic patterns. While pricing across the board has gone up since 2020, pricing for used round balers hasn't greatly fluctuated, according to Ryan Atherton, a salesman at Peabody's, Inc., a New Holland dealer with two locations in northwest Illinois.

"It's been kind of constant over the years," he says. "A lot of people will trade at the same bale count, no matter what. It's more of a one in, one out scenario."

Round balers continue to be popular, as many farms are set up for that type of storage and feeding. Round bales shed moisture more easily than square bales, and Atherton says farmers in his area usually store bales outside.

As baling season gets underway, Atherton

expects that the used market could go one of two ways.

"I could see people deciding to hang on to what they have and do a little maintenance, because balers are generally easy to fix," he says. "I can also see people deciding that they can't spend money on a new tractor this year, but they could swing a baler. It all depends on the weather and what the corn and bean markets do."

Pricing and Availability

A search of bigiron.com for model year 2020 and newer round balers revealed 47 units sold recently. The John Deere 560M was the most popular model, with 17 sold. Prices ranged from \$10,800, for a 2020 Case IH RB455A in Texas, to \$50,750 for a Deere 560M in South Dakota, with a low bale count and many upgraded features. The average sale price was \$33,050.

John Deere's Machine Finder website tells a similar story, with the 560M comprising nearly half of all used balers available on

dealer lots. Pricing on those balers ranged from \$69,900, for a 2022 model in Minnesota, to \$24,500, for a 2021 model in Nebraska.

Beyond bale count and year, added features, such as hydraulic bale lift, moisture sensors, and net wrap capability, helped add to the final price.

Choosing a Baler

Understanding what you need and want in a baler is the first step in finding the unit that's right for you, says Kaylene Ballesteros, John Deere's go-to-market manager for hay and forage. "The first thing to ask yourself," she says, "is, 'What size of bale do I want?'"

Location sometimes

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*Comparing a 9RX 640 with a N560F and a C850 cart filled halfway vs. a 9RX 830 with a N560F and a C850T cart filled all the way up, both operating at max engine hp. The hills ranged from 8 degrees to 12 degrees in slope.



The popular John Deere 560M baler can be upgraded with a variety of options to fit your operation.

determines bale size, depending on road width and available storage space. In the Midwest, Ballesteros says larger, 5x6-foot bales tend to be more popular; in the South, some farmers prefer smaller sizes.

The ability to use your baler for silage is another important consideration when deciding on the right machine. For example, John Deere offers silage options on their M and R models.

Baler Technology

While baler technology may not seem to change as quickly as that for other equipment types, several recent updates improve efficiency.

“Our R spec balers have high-capacity pickup, which internal testing has shown can pick up and feed crop at 33% greater capacity than our M spec [mega-wide]



Karen Jones, machinery executive editor, covers machinery topics for *Successful Farming* magazine and *Agriculture.com*. Email karen.jones@agriculture.com

balers,” Ballesteros says. “That works out to around 80 more bales a day.”

Another option on the high-capacity balers is a pre-cutter, which helps farmers who grind their hay after baling. This feature automatically cuts the hay to the size you want, eliminating the need to grind it again.

A recent study from Kansas State University says that non-pre-cut bales lose an average 73 pounds of dry matter compared with a 20-pound loss in pre-cut bales.

“If you think of that in ROI terms, it can be around the \$5 mark for every ton you’re losing,” Ballesteros says.

Available since 2012, bale automation takes much of the guesswork out of producing consistent bales. The tractor operates at the correct speed, stops when the bale reaches a pre-selected size, wraps automatically, kicks the bale out, and proceeds forward.

John Deere Operations Center is another tool a farmer can add to any piece of equipment. This software collects data and uses predictive monitoring to determine operator and machine efficiency. Bale

documentation technology is a new feature on 2024 and later models that adds additional logistical data to help make better informed production decisions. This technology, which analyzes bale moisture and yield by field, allows growers to compare cuttings and years to help improve field and bale performance.

Case IH Brings LiDAR Technology to Hay Producers

Automation kit improves productivity, bale quality, and operator experience.

Case IH introduced baler automation at the 2024 National

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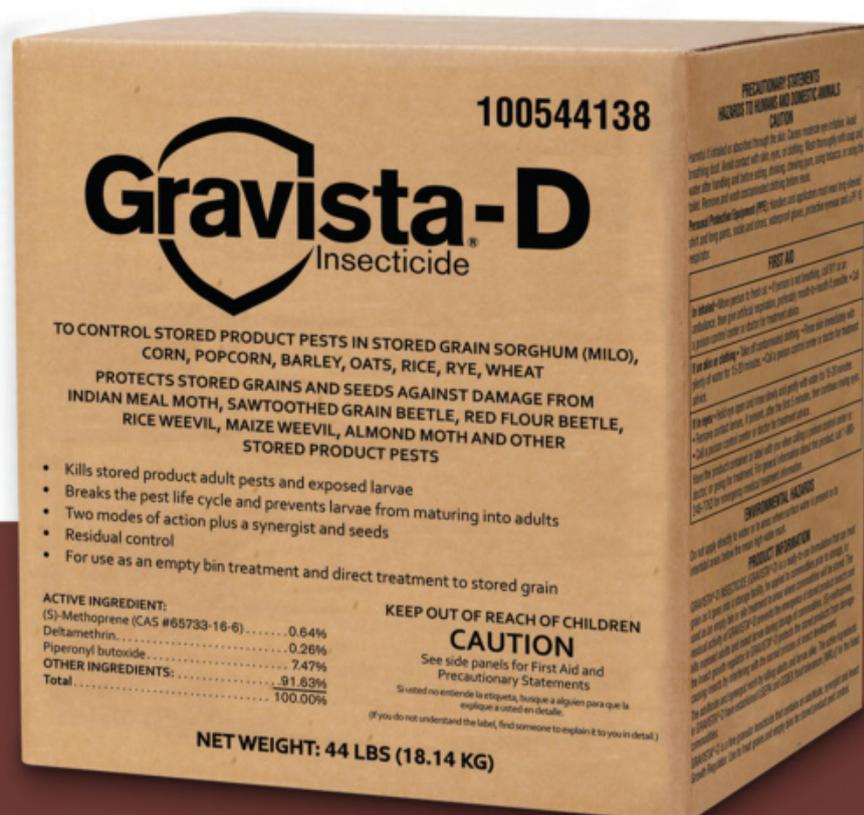
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*In laboratory setting **Data on file

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LiDAR technology creates efficiency by measuring windrows and automatically adjusting speed.



Cattlemen's Beef Association Cattle Con in Orlando, Florida. The technology allows for hands-free operation and consistent, large square bales regardless of operator experience level.

A dealer-installed automation kit connects seamlessly with Class 3 ISOBUS Puma, Optum, and Magnum tractors. It is compatible with HD models from model years 2020 to 2024, and XL models from model years 2022 to 2024.

“Productivity is the name of the game when it comes to the tight operating windows hay producers face,” says Brian Spencer, hay and forage marketing manager at Case IH. “Baler automation is the perfect example of purposeful technology from Case IH. It aims to tackle efficiencies by taking the duty off the operator to steer and make adjustments, allowing them to add productivity.”

Case IH baler automation is the industry’s first LiDAR (light detection and ranging) baling system, opening opportunities for hay producers in efficiency and productivity, the company says.

The LiDAR-based swath analysis sends out laser pulses to measure the windrows’ position and size. The technology adjusts the tractor’s speed and steering to maximize throughput without overloading the baler. This results in increased runtime compared with traditional baling.

Also, with automatic adjustments and hands-free baling, producers can put less experienced operators in the cab, or spend their time in the cab running farm operations or focusing on other business.

“This technology is built for the unpredictable yet expected challenges in baling with crooked windrows, and inconsistent widths and heights,” Spencer

adds. “The automatic adjustments in steering and speed ensure the bales are consistent and the baler is running at peak performance, avoiding blockages and overfilling.”

Case IH precision technology through AFS Connect also ensures that tracking and monitoring occur during the baling process. Hay producers can remotely monitor field performance and tractor diagnostics during baling, while securing records for review after the harvest concludes. For more information, visit

caseih.com. 

Continue to next page

LIFE

In Ag

From the Archives

LIFE magazine debuted Nov. 23, 1936, as the first dedicated photography magazine in the United States. Since then, the publication has been known for stunning photographs depicting all aspects of life. These images are from the LIFE picture collection. For more LIFE in agriculture photos, go to [LIFE.com](https://www.life.com). 

ERGAGE



Sweet, Juicy Watermelon

By **Diana Weesner**
diana.weesner@agriculture.com

“Don’t swallow the seeds or you’ll grow a melon in your tummy.” Weren’t we all told this as a child? Whether you were in a melon-eating contest or seed-spitting contest at the county or state fair, I’m sure you have a fond memory of eating sweet, juicy watermelon, like these kids.

Clockwise from top left:

Date: July 1960

Location: unknown

Photographer: Joe Scherschel

Date: 1946

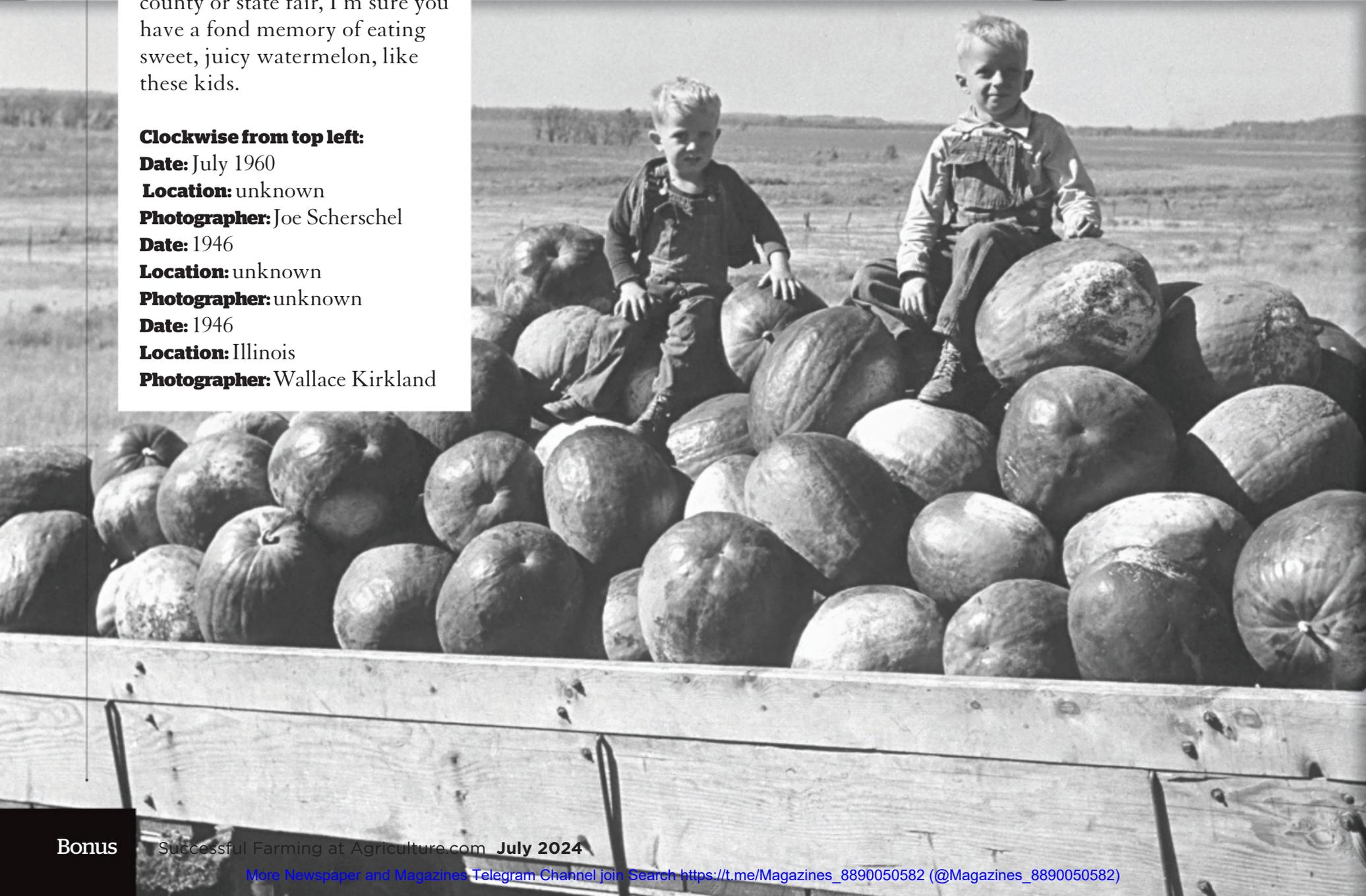
Location: unknown

Photographer: unknown

Date: 1946

Location: Illinois

Photographer: Wallace Kirkland







HESSTON 1 SERIES ROUND BALER

The new baler features an easy-load net roll.

By **Alex Gray**, New Products Editor
alex.gray@agriculture.com

Massey Ferguson has announced the 1 Series round baler with camless pickup, designed for baling in dry hay, stover, and residue applications.

“This is a baler that can handle all the conditions we have in North America,” says Dane Mosel, tactical marketing manager for Massey Ferguson. “This thing will do pretty much whatever you put in front of it — if you get it over the pickup and into the rotor — it is going to bale.”

The 1 Series replaces Massey Ferguson’s 2900 Series in North America and comes in two variable-chamber models: the RB.146, which makes up to 4-by-6-foot round bales; and the RB.156, for up to 5-by-6-foot bales. The camless pickup has reduced the horsepower requirements to 80 hp for the RB.146, and 100 hp for the RB.156.

Fast and Easy

“From the moment of cutting, hay quality begins to diminish,” Mosel says. “Our one purpose is providing the tools farmers need for faster baling without jeopardizing

quality. The 1 Series allows operators to maintain density while running at increased speeds. Additionally, they have access to cutting-edge technology that makes haying easier than ever before.”

The baler uses a vertical chamber, taking advantage of gravity to increase bale density without the need for additional power. The baler has cross-platform commonality, which includes tractor implement management capabilities, allowing the baler to stop the tractor and completely cycle the bale.

Net Loading

The baler now is easier to load, with minimal physical effort. The front-mounted net binding system is designed for faster and tighter binding without compromising operator visibility. The duckbill-style net system moves net from the roll to the bale, minimizing environmental obstructions. The net braking system is designed for one-handed adjustments without tools to ensure optimal tension.

An easy-load net system comes standard on the 1 Series, with the net roll pivoting out at about tailgate height on the left side of the

baler, reducing the need to lift the net wrap. The right side of the baler can add an optional second easy-load rack. A hydraulic drop floor option allows operators to clear obstructions without leaving the tractor.

Heavy-duty

The 1 Series baler includes several heavy-duty components to withstand harsh field conditions. These include triple-lip sealed bearings to keep out debris; heavy-wall aggressive rollers, with welded cleats; and debris shields and cast roller flares to prevent material buildup and protect bearings. Several maintenance-free components help minimize downtime, as well.

Mosel says this baler is built with as many common parts and common electronic architecture as possible. This means using identical rollers, pickups, sensors, and more from across Massey Ferguson and Fendt’s product lineup.

“A lot of those components we tried to keep as common as possible,” Mosel says. “That way, a dealer selling both balers, when something happens, parts are available. It’s a piece of equipment — it’s not if it breaks down, it’s when it breaks down.”

Availability

The Hesston by Massey Ferguson 1 Series round baler is available to order now. For more information, visit www.masseyferguson.com. 



BRAZIL: A RISING COMPETITOR

Experts say the U.S. will continue to compete with Brazil for export markets.

By **Cassidy Walter**, Business Management Editor
cassidy.walter@agriculture.com, @CassidyARWalter

This past marketing year, Brazil exported more corn than the U.S. for the first time in history — and it may not be the last time.

Over decades, Brazil has risen as an agricultural production powerhouse and become a stiff competitor for U.S. exports, particularly to China. Experts say this competition is going to persist; finding ways to diversify and grow demand can help.

Brazil's Production Surge

According to data from the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, in 20 years Brazil has nearly tripled corn and soybean production, and exports have exploded by more than 1,000% and 400%, respectively.

“It’s easy to think about [the soybean

boom] as a Brazilian story,” says Dr. Guilherme DePaula, a native Brazilian who is assistant professor of economics at Iowa State University. “But if you dig deep, it’s as much a U.S. story as a Brazilian story, because the boom happened when the trading companies jumped in.” Much of DePaula’s research has focused on Brazilian agriculture.

DePaula says investments from companies such as ADM, Bunge, and Cargill were integral to developing soybean and corn crops in Brazil.

“They started financing, commercializing, and transporting high volumes of soybeans from Brazil, mostly to China,” he says.

‘A Particularly Difficult Hurdle’

Between Brazil’s robust production rates, higher U.S. prices, and a strong dollar, the

U.S. has increasingly felt the sting of competition in recent years. Joe Foley, commodity trading manager for corn and soybeans at global commodity shipping company Columbia Grain International, says the last three to five years have been particularly tough.

“With what’s going on in Brazil with production right now, we have a particularly difficult hurdle to get over,” he says.

To make matters worse, recently the U.S. hasn’t been able to bank on a longtime advantage it usually has over Brazil: transportation.

Historically, while the U.S. was known for being reliable, Brazil has struggled with infrastructure to get the crop out of the country. But during the past two years, Mississippi River water levels have dropped to record lows, slowing shipments and raising costs. Furthermore, DePaula says, transportation is the latest chapter in the story of Brazilian agriculture and American investment, with progress being made now toward better roads.

The Great Wallet of China

Brazil is China’s largest supplier of soybeans and, for now, its largest corn supplier. Steve Nicholson, global strategist on grains and oilseeds for Missouri-based lender and insurer Rabo AgriFinance, says he expects the U.S. and Brazil to continue to compete for China’s business. ▶

“With the continued deterioration of the U.S.-Chinese relationship, the Chinese have pulled more and more business away from us and moved more and more business to Brazil,” he says. “They’re going to do anything to ‘punish’ the U.S. for their perceived ill treatment. They’re going to go someplace where they feel like they’re loved, wanted, and people want to do business with them.”

Nicholson says the recent U.S.-China trade war has a lot to do with China’s negative feelings.

“I said during the ’17–’18 period, when the tariffs were put on, that this will harm us for a number of years and it will take us a long time to get back the label of being a reliable supplier,” he says. “We’re still dealing with that hangover.”

The good news? Nicholson says China is a pragmatic buyer.

“If we have the cheapest beans, they’re going to come to us,” he says. “They’re very price-sensitive.”

DePaula agrees, saying China wants competition between the U.S. and Brazil to drive prices lower.

Different Continents, Same Struggles

While Brazil has become a major U.S. competitor, it may be surprising to learn Brazilian farmers face many of the same challenges as American growers, such as worrying about getting enough rain, and a good price for their crops.

“Brazilian farmers are struggling with the same price issues as U.S. farmers,” DePaula says. “They have the same struggles with costs, with financing their farms, and with competition.”

DePaula says the central state of Mato Grosso, Brazil’s largest soybean-producing state, is facing prices below the cost of production. He also notes Brazilian farmers



Soybean field in Mato Grosso

are additionally disadvantaged by not having the grain storage capacity U.S. farmers enjoy, limiting farmers’ abilities to hold out for better prices.

The Hunt for Demand

Unless global demand increases, DePaula says, the supply situation could be lose-lose for both countries.

“You see the U.S. investing in demand-generation programs, and Brazil is doing the same,” he says, adding Brazil is looking to start blending an increased amount of biodiesel with its diesel fuel supply. Biodiesel is a renewable fuel made from fats and vegetable oils, including soybean oil. It is typically blended into diesel fuel at a specific percentage. “That tells you that there is a real limit where the competition becomes unprofitable anymore if you don’t generate this additional demand,” DePaula says.

Nicholson says the U.S. should look to the European Union (EU)

as a potential new market because the EU’s concerns about Brazilian deforestation may impede that country’s access. He also suggests farmers look into niche opportunities such as non-GMO or low-carbon crop markets.

“[Yes], they’re going to take more management time and more management resources and energy,” he says. “But if it’s good for the economic vitality and sustainability of the operation, that’s worth looking at.” 



Cassidy Walter, Business Management Editor, covers agricultural markets and farm business for *Agriculture.com* and *Successful Farming* magazine. Email: cassidy.walter@agriculture.com

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MY FATHER'S 'WORD'

Problem: What happens when a will doesn't match a promise?

By **Jolene Brown, CSP, CPAE**

I always thought my father's word was good. I just found out it wasn't.

I worked side-by-side with Dad for almost 30 years as we fed cattle and grew crops. He was a sole proprietor and never wanted to sell or gift any portion of the farm to me because he heard I wouldn't get the "stepped-up basis." He often said, "Just wait until I'm gone, then the farm will be yours."

Dad recently had a heart attack and died two days later. At the reading of his will, I found out he left the farm to "all of us kids" equally. My sister and brothers were shocked. Then, I began to hear what they would do with the money they could get from their share of the farm.

I am devastated. I'm trying to work through the pain and survive. I hope my story might help someone else. Would you please share?

- Submitted by email from D.G.

Solution

I wish I could comfort you as you work through the emotions and results of your father's choice, D.G.. I hope you have a loving spouse and children, true friends, a compassionate faith leader, and a family doctor with mental health resources. This is not a time to walk alone, count "what's lost,"

or even "what's left." Eventually, that all must be addressed, but right now, you need support and guidance to help you maneuver through these days.

And yes, I'll share your story. You have reminded us that "a conversation is not a contract" and "if it's not in writing, it does not exist." The best intent, not backed by legal documents, is just that — an intent, wish, hope, or expectation. The fall to reality is devastating to the people and the business.

Because you want your experience to help others, this is the lesson: If the assets of your estate affect the continuation of the business, then transparency of the following is needed: a legal, discussed, revised estate plan; a management, leadership, and ownership transfer plan; a buy-sell agreement or specific transfer documents that trump a will; and a listing of details for those left behind.

• **An estate plan assures your assets go to the people you choose and may minimize income, gift, and estate taxes.** It may include

structure documents, a will, possibly trusts, and durable powers of attorney for medical and financial directives. These documents need to be shared, and revised as needed. Others do not have to like what you

have planned, but they deserve to know it. Your distribution affects the continuation of the business.

• **A management, leadership, and ownership transfer plan.**

This assures the farm can continue in the hands of those who know the business and have that authority on behalf of the owners.

• **A buy-sell agreement or a specific ownership transfer document trumps a will.**

These legal documents define terms of transfer, purchasing, and/or gifting. Wills can be changed on a whim, as long as the individual is of sound mind.

• **A listing of details for those left behind.** This covers a multitude of particulars such as birth certificate and burial plot, passwords, locations of documents, and names of advisers and people you trust. This list allows your loved ones to celebrate your life, not be wrapped in a mess of uncertainty.

D.G., your story reminds us of the need for transparency and a good attorney. I imagine if you had known the terms of your father's will 30 years ago, you would have invested your time and money differently.

For now, please know your story and pain may help many others.

Thank you. **SF**



Jolene Brown is a professional speaker, author, farmer, and family business consultant. She shares her passion, experience, and fun-filled spirit with farmers and ranchers across North America.

Her tested business tools provide leadership and management solutions for the people who feed, clothe, and fuel the world. jolenebrown.com



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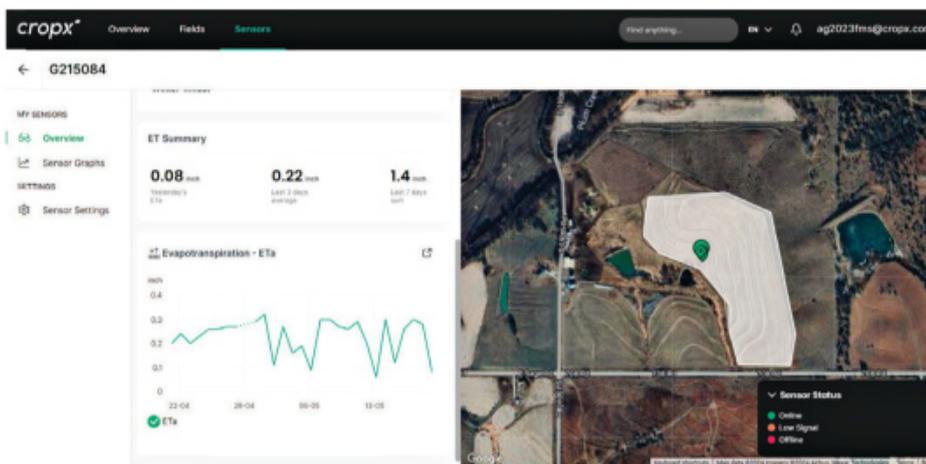


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Below: The Direct ET sensor gives up-to-date field-specific evapotranspiration data to inform irrigation management.



The Reinke Direct ET sensor by CropX mounts to a center pivot and provides actual evapotranspiration (ETa) measurements.

Monitoring Evapotranspiration

Tracking evapotranspiration (ET) rates is another traditional method for irrigation scheduling. Calculations can be cumbersome, and ET is usually estimated. Reinke Direct ET by CropX provides actual evapotranspiration (ETa) measurements via a sensor mounted on a Reinke center-pivot irrigation system.

Direct ET offers measured, field-specific values without needing additional calculations.

Placed above the plant canopy on the center point of the irrigation system, the device uses surface renewal technology to measure the amount of water vapor the wind carries away from the crop, Gates explains.

Measuring the amount of crop-used water gives farmers daily insights into their fields' water needs. "This accuracy allows farmers to apply water only as needed, directly addressing the plant's requirements," Gates says.

"It's really a totally different way of measuring crop water use," agrees Emanuel, who beta-tested the Direct ET sensor on his farm last summer. He notes that soil moisture probes can often mean extra work, installing them at the beginning of the year, then removing them before harvest. The ET sensor, however, "provides a little more flexibility, where it's really just a one-time install in the pivot, and it's going to be there from year to year." ▶

UNLOCK WATER SAVINGS

Latest irrigation technologies can help lower water, electric, and fertilizer costs.

By **Adrienne Held**, Agronomy Executive Editor, adrienne.held@agriculture.com

Nick Emanuel farms 2,000 acres of corn and soybeans in North Bend, Nebraska. He has seen the benefits of utilizing soil moisture probes on his farm.

"We're seeing savings across the board starting with water savings, but also our electricity usage that runs the pivots," he says. The probes save him an average three to four rotations per year, including about \$1,100 in electricity for each rotation. "The more pivots you have," he says, "the more that adds up."

Soil sensors are one way farmers can dial in their irrigation scheduling and fine-tune variable rate irrigation (VRI), explains John Gates, chief revenue officer with CropX. The company uses artificial intelligence (AI) and other technology to help farmers manage operations.

Compared to previous irrigation scheduling methods based on educated guesses of moisture availability, Emanuel says soil sensors offer an in-depth analysis

of actual soil moisture, crop water use, and overall crop health.

Gates recommends one sensor per quarter-section pivot to aid in scheduling. For VRI he recommends bumping that up to three.

"You're using the pivot to put on more water in some areas, less in other areas, in order to do some problem solving," Gates says. "Maybe it's around soil variability, topography, or compaction."

Emanuel says using CropX soil sensors, he's also noticed increased fertilizer efficiency.

"With our old irrigation practices, there was a tendency to overwater, and each time you're overwatering, it increases the risk of leaching nutrients through the profile," he explains. "It also creates an anaerobic environment, which prevents the crop from utilizing nutrients efficiently. Through in-season tissue and soil sampling [with the soil moisture probes], we've seen a direct correlation with better nutrient uptake getting into the plant."



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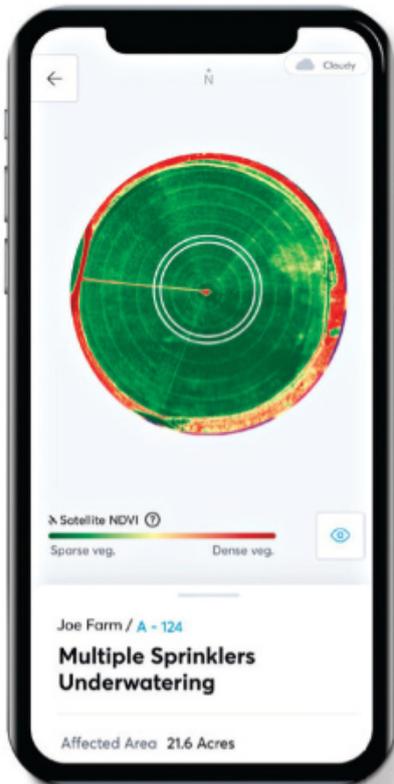
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¹ Compared to Generation 4 models.



Valley Irrigation Insights uses artificial intelligence to virtually scout fields and can alert to irrigation anomalies.

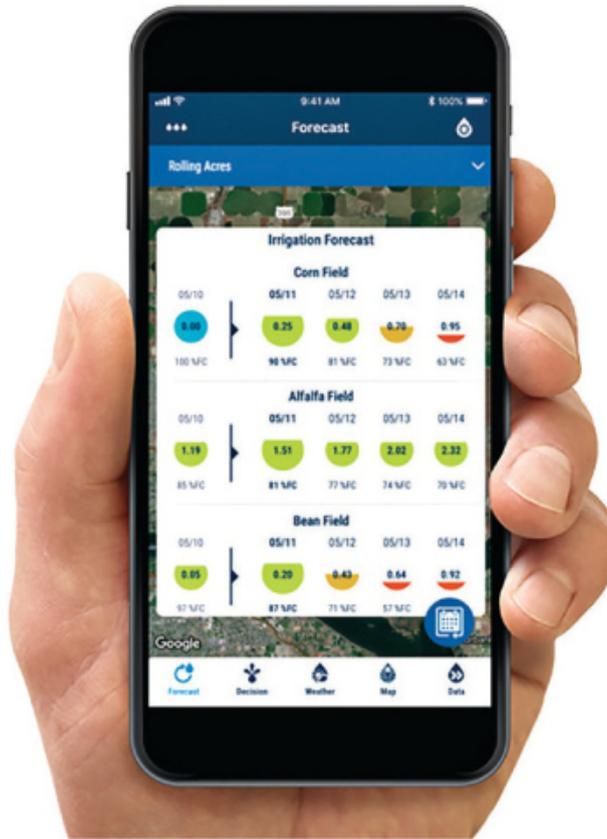
Emanuel says he felt confident with the data it provided for the specific crop and individual fields. “I think there’s potential moving forward to complement working together with the soil moisture probe to give us detailed soil moisture readings below the ground, and then crop water usage from the Direct ET aboveground,” he says.

Digital Tools

Sensors are not the only way to dial in irrigation accuracy. Lindsay Corporation and Valley Irrigation offer digital platforms to inform irrigation management decisions.

Earlier this year, Nebraska-based Lindsay updated their digital FieldNET platform, called FieldNET Next Gen, which allows farmers to manage pivots, laterals, pumps, alerts, and data, all from one place.

Justin Gibson, Lindsay’s senior manager of digital agronomy, describes FieldNET as a “sensorless, purely digital tool” that ingests data such as weather, soil, satellite imagery, and irrigation application. The company tracks how much water has been applied to the field. That information is entered into a crop model, which employs layers of localized weather data, soil



Valley Scheduling generates irrigation forecasts based on soil moisture, crop, and weather data.

moisture, and crop water to simulate soil moisture and crop water use. “We can give a recommendation to that grower every day for every one of their fields and their FieldNET connected operation,” Gibson says.

For farms with VRI-capable pivots, FieldNET also can generate variable-rate irrigation maps, enabling sector-by-sector application. “If they have a VRI-capable pivot with nozzle control,” Gibson notes, “we can even make them a nozzle control prescription based on FieldNET Advisor.”

Valley, also based in Nebraska, offers a single platform to manage a range of technologies including Monitoring and Control, Forecast and Plan tools (Irrigation Scheduling), Optimize and Apply tools (VRI), and Irrigation Insights.

Irrigation Scheduling allows farmers to view data on soil moisture, crop type, stage of development, and automatically updated weather information, and generates irrigation forecasts based on this data. “Scheduling analyzes the water balance in your field at any given time and recommends the appropriate amount of water to add, based on the crop and the

field’s water capacity,” says Lior Goren Ruck, vice president of Prospera software products by Valley.

Pivot Monitoring and Control allows farmers to control their pivots remotely. “With Valley 365, growers can integrate all these products,” she explains. “For instance, you can view your irrigation forecast in the scheduling product, determine the necessary water amount, then switch to the monitoring and control section of the app to send a command to your pivot.”

Irrigation Insights leverages imagery and artificial intelligence algorithms to virtually scout fields. Insights sends alerts for any watering irregularities, pivot-related issues, or crop health concerns, allowing growers to adjust pivots, maintain crop uniformity, and reduce overall input costs.

Goren Ruck says what’s really powerful about these products is “their ability to work together, addressing all decision points and needs that growers have in planning, operating, and managing their irrigation side of the farm.”

Digital tools, Gibson says, can reduce irrigation applications but retain the same yields. “They also have peace of mind and a reduction in the amount of time they spend making plans for irrigation across the operation,” he adds. “We’re making that decision easier by crunching all the numbers for them automatically.” 



Gray leaf spot

FOUR TIPS FOR MANAGING DISEASE

Minimize risk in the face of falling commodity prices.

By **Chelsea Dinterman**, Assistant Agronomy Editor
chelsea.dinterman@agriculture.com
[@CDintermanSF](https://twitter.com/CDintermanSF)

Pulling back on disease management can be tempting when commodity prices fall. While lower input costs may sound like an easy way to save money, the risk of diseases decimating corn yields increases significantly.

“Economics, at the end of the day, is going to drive a lot of the decisions,” says Ryan Bryant, a herbicides technical development manager for UPL. “When considering inputs, we have to keep that return on invest-

ment in mind but also understand what the risk is if we don’t make any applications.”

1 **Understand Disease Risk**

Disease pressure can vary greatly from year to year and field to field. Stay informed on which diseases could emerge. Gray leaf spot, Northern Corn Leaf Blight, and Diplodia leaf streak remain prevalent throughout most of the Corn Belt, while tar spot and Southern rust also are increasing concerns.

“Southern rust doesn’t overwinter in the U.S.; it blows in from South and Central America, so the conditions there determine how much rust and spores get up here,” says

Tyler Harp, technical fungicide manager for Syngenta Crop Protection. “In a bad year, it can be very devastating,” he says. “Tar spot does overwinter here, so if growers have had tar spot diagnosed in their [counties], they’re always going to have to be on the lookout for that.”

Weather significantly affects corn disease spread. In 2023, dry conditions meant extremely low disease pressure in many parts of the



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Northern Corn Leaf Blight



Corn Belt, but that's no reason to relax this season, with its early abundant rain.

Disease can be most severe when farmers don't pay attention, Bryant says. "When we start to see those conditions develop, hopefully, that means we're getting some rain," he notes. "We just need to be mindful of the conditions and what is associated with each disease."

2 Scout Early and Often

Getting into fields early and tracking any disease progression can allow for timely decisions regarding fungicide applications. To catch early symptomatology, Bryant recommends thorough scouting during the early reproductive stages.

In some cases, scouting when weather points to higher disease risk can save fields

from devastating yield losses. Tar spot, for example, can explode in cooler, humid conditions, when leaves are exposed to wetness for an extended period.

"When we start to see the stars align for that type of situation, that's when we really need to be on our game and get a timely fungicide application made before we see significant incidence of disease," Bryant says.

When scouting, be sure to evaluate the entire plant, since different diseases may appear on different parts. Also, root digs can show evidence of hidden diseases such as crown rot.

3 Understand Fungicide Value

Fine-tuning input applications can help with cost cutting, but don't lose sight of fungicide benefits.

"Our goal, especially in a year like this,

with commodity prices lower, is to educate people about the importance of knowing what's in their program and what value it's bringing to their farm," says Camille Lambert, a technical service manager for FMC.

Strong, overlapping residual herbicide programs and a foliar fungicide can help ensure every bushel is protected, Lambert says.

Beyond disease control, some fungicides offer plant health benefits such as stress mitigation.

Today's fungicides aren't like those your father or



Crown Rot Concerns

Crown rot concerns have increased across the Midwest. Plant pathologists recently determined the *Fusarium graminearum* pathogen is the primary cause of the disease.

“The crown acts like a liver for the corn plant,” says Camille Lambert, a technical service manager for FMC. “The crown filters out heavy metals and is the transport system for water and nutrition up into the plant.”

When the crown becomes clogged from a crown rot infection, the plant becomes susceptible to secondary diseases. Crown rot can result in significant yield losses, especially when farmers neglect root digs.

Lambert “absolutely” recommends more root digs, especially if planting a susceptible hybrid. “Crown rot can open the door for secondary infections, like stalk rot,” she points out, “which can cause standability problems at harvest. It’s really crucial to understand the disease pressure in your fields to modify future management strategies.” •

grandfather used, Syngenta’s Harp says. For example, he points out, Syngenta’s new plant-health fungicides contain a newer carboxamide and SDHI chemistry, which can mitigate stress.

“We’re not only preserving yield in the presence of biotics such as diseases,” he says, “but we’re preserving yield in the presence of abiotic stress such as heat and drought. There’s a whole new value in what these products can deliver in terms of yield preservation.”

Harp says data from 550 field trials across the Corn Belt showed a profitable return on investment 80% of the time when using Syngenta’s biofungicide.

For some farmers, those added benefits may mean applying fungicide becomes less

situational and more part of routine agronomic practice. Applying fungicide preemptively, when timed right, also could lead to better disease control.

Once you have some disease or stress, an applied fungicide can protect from subsequent stress or disease but won’t repair existing damage. “It’s best to protect your investment with a preventative application,” Harp recommends.

4 Manage Resistance

Once, farmers often relied heavily on one active ingredient rather than pair it with other control methods. But to extend the life of existing control options, make resistance top of mind.

“When you put all the selection pressure

on one active ingredient, that generates pathogen resistance,” Harp says. “Today we use two- and three-way mixtures, where each active ingredient is effective on the given pathogen. The selection pressure is spread among two or three different powerful modes of action, which helps us to minimize resistance.”

Using robust rates, rotating active ingredients when making additional applications, and incorporating novel modes of action can also limit disease resistance. **SF**

Amber Waves of Grain

Wheat yield contest winners share tips for success.

By **Bill Spiegel**

Since reaching 80 million acres of wheat in 1980, U.S. farmers are growing less of the crop: just 50 million acres of all classes planted for the 2023–24 crop year.

Still, wheat is important on farms in nearly every state. It is a key component of a well-balanced crop rotation, and adds diversified income to farmers who fine-tune crop management skills and push yields.

Participants in the 2023 National Wheat Yield Contest used several strategies to push yields, many of which they share below.

Setting the Stage

Profitable yields start with fresh new seed each year, says John Wesolowski. The farmer in Warren,

Minnesota (northeast of Grand Forks, North Dakota) buys new spring wheat seed each year, adding a package of insecticide, fungicide, and biological seed treatment.

New seed has a pure genetic profile, whereas farmer-saved seed may have watered-down genetics, depending on how many years it has been saved. New seed can be expensive, but for Wesolowski, the convenience outweighs the cost.

“I can go to my supplier and get professionally treated seed with all the goodies that I want. And it’s perfect,” he explains.

Travis Freeburg, who

grows hard red winter wheat in Pine Bluffs, in far-west Wyoming, agrees. Plus, buying new seed each year allows him to take advantage of new genetics.

He has long used Clearfield varieties from Colorado State University in nearby Fort Collins. For 2024, he added a Coaxium variety. “With

Coaxium, I can mix Aggressor herbicide with broadleaf herbicides for one-pass control,” he says, adding that Beyond herbicide has worked well with

Clearfield varieties to control rye and cheat grass.

Lance Olson has a flax/spring wheat/canola crop rotation on his farm in the

southwest North Dakota community of Mott. He uses a Shelbourne Reynolds stripper header on flax and wheat to ensure as much residue as possible protects the soil and preserves moisture. That’s a limiting factor on his operation.

Olson says the farm gets about 10 inches of precipitation each year on average, and soils range from sand to loam. “We have about every type of soil you can imagine,” he says, “and choose our wheat varieties to match our soils.”

Seeding Strategies

Wesolowski’s field of WestBred WB9590 topped the dryland spring wheat category of the 2023 National Wheat Yield Contest with a 126.09 bushel-per-acre (bpa) yield. ▶

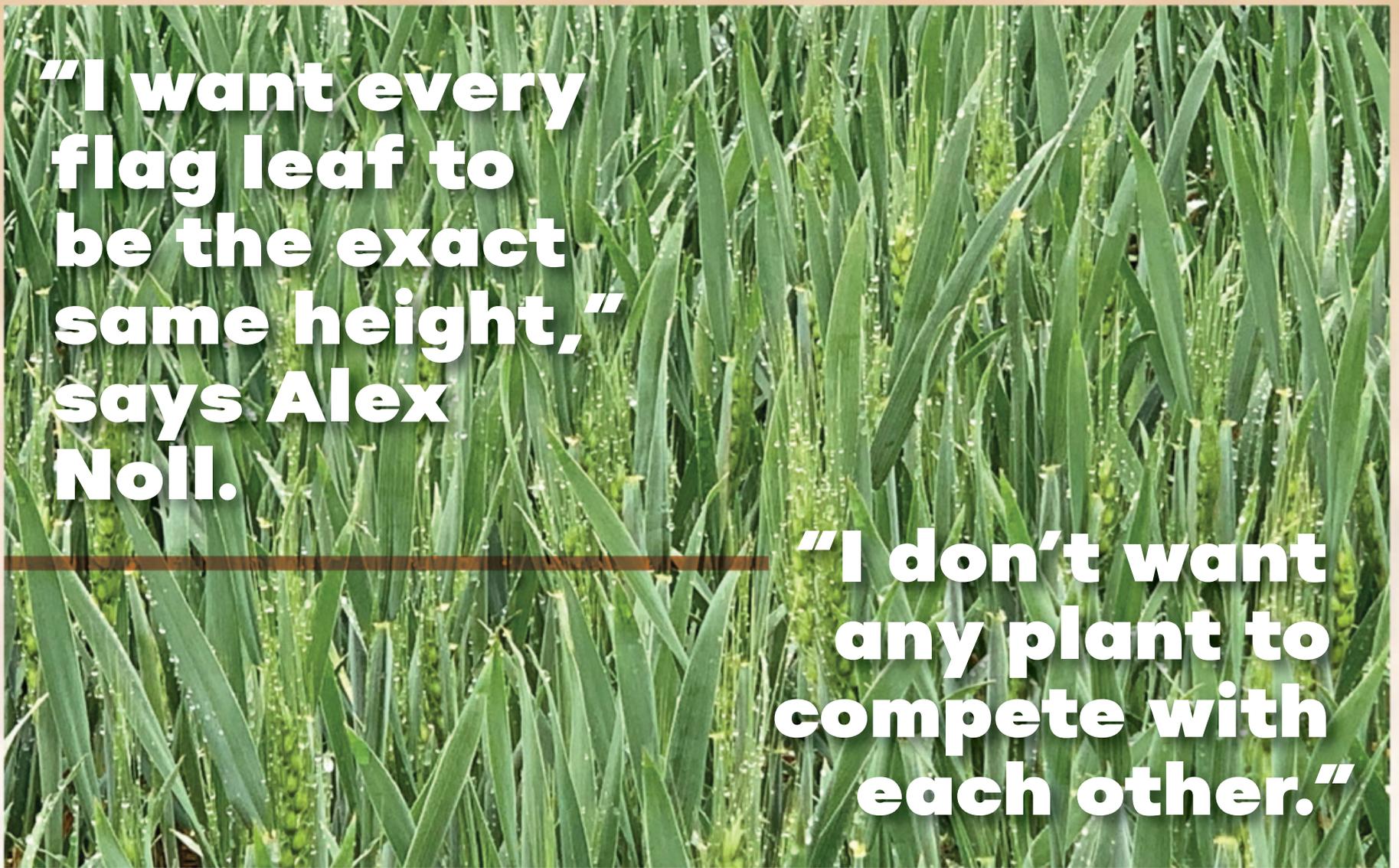


John Wesolowski



Travis Freeburg





“I want every flag leaf to be the exact same height,” says Alex Noll.

“I don’t want any plant to compete with each other.”

In 2023, for the first time, he adopted variable-rate wheat seeding. He adjusted the seeding rate from 1.5 million seeds per acre — commonly recommended to spring wheat growers — to 1 million seeds per acre on higher-producing areas, and 1.375 million seeds on lower-producing regions.

He’d planted 1.5 million seeds per acre as a longtime standard, but, he explains, “I just thought there was too much seed, and plants competed with each other.” Those thickly planted areas caused lodging and harvestability issues.

Now, with the right amount of seed in the right place, he says, stands emerge thinner and shorter, are less prone to lodging, and easier to harvest.

Wesolowski says he didn’t notice any yield loss where the seeding rate was lower. Moreover, he says he saved about \$8 per acre in

seed costs.

On a different field, the Minnesota farmer further tested three different seeding rates, aiming for live seed populations of 850,000, 1.25 million, and 1.5 million.

“And when I harvested those strips, I didn’t lose any yield from wheat that was seeded at 850,000 live seeds,” he says.

Olson, who earned second place in the 2023 contest’s spring wheat division, with a dryland yield of 122.09 bpa, says a paying strategy is keeping seeding equipment up-to-date and in tip-top shape.

“I don’t buy new stuff,” he says. “I just keep mine updated and well maintained.”

He uses a John Deere air seeder, with 7.5-inch spacing, to drop 1.5 million seeds per acre. The machine includes the SeederForce downforce

control, from Precision Planting, plus blockage sensors, and Deere’s Pro Series drill updates.

Fertilizer Strategies

Alex Noll, whose 103.99 bpa yield won the 2023 contest’s Kansas dryland division, deploys some of the same strategies in soft wheat as he does in corn.

“The biggest takeaway for me is adopting a split-nutrition application,” says Noll, of Winchester, Kansas, northwest

of Kansas City. He points out that many standard wheat programs call for adding a big percentage of nitrogen in the fall, or in dormancy. “Any corn grower aiming for high yields won’t put all the fertilizer on at the beginning of the season,” he asserts.

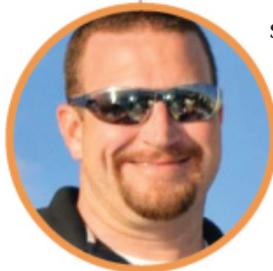
A frequent winner of the

Kansas Corn Growers Corn Yield contests, Noll applies about 30% of the suggested nitrogen rates at dormancy, 30% at early green-up, and the remainder between green-up and the flag-leaf stage.

“I want every flag leaf to be the exact same height,” says Noll, who insists that this is no different than aiming for perfectly spaced emergence on corn. “I don’t want any plant to compete with each other,” he says. “I want them to be exactly the same.”

Whereas Noll’s farm receives about 40 inches of annual precipitation, Freeburg’s farm, near the Wyoming/Colorado/Nebraska borders, gets only about 15. His yield goal and fertilizer strategy reflect that discrepancy.

“We’re doing more grid sampling, and even did tissue testing in 2023,” says Freeburg, who earned



Alex Noll



“The first field I used that rate controller on, it paid for itself. It’s paid me back many times over.”

- John Wesolowski

second place in the 2023 quality contest portion of the National Wheat Yield Contest, tallying 118.24 bpa. Performed at flag-leaf time, tissue testing may be too late in the season to address nutrient deficiencies on dryland acres. However, on fields irrigated with a center pivot system, the crop can be spoon-fed nutrition through the pivot later in the season.

Freeburg keeps the same base fertilizer program in dryland and irrigated wheat: 40 Rock (12-40-0, with 6.5% sulfur and 1% zinc) in-furrow at planting, with an air seeder; and top-dressing in the spring, with more nitrogen, applied with a ground-rig sprayer equipped with streamer bars. “We try to have about 1.2 to 1.5 pounds of nitrogen per bushel of yield goal,” he says.

Wesolowski soil-tests every field each year and has adopted variable-rate anhydrous ammonia, using a Raven Sidekick injection system. An NZone GL nitrogen stabilizer from AgXplore ensures the crop gets nitrogen when needed.

“The first field I used that rate controller on, it paid for itself,” he explains. “It’s paid me back many times over.”

As a bonus, the program has enabled Wesolowski to reduce nitrogen application across all crops.

“We’re seeing a lot more leftover nitrate on the soil test,” he says. “It’s kind of crazy how that has changed since I started using that product. It’s sticking around not only year one, but in year two, and it’s allowed me to reduce my N rate, which is great because it’s

our most expensive input.”

Protect the Crop

More often, farmers maiming for top yields routinely apply fungicide. Whether diseases are in play or not, fungicides seem to improve plant health, and give wheat a longer growing season to maximize grain fill and improve test weight.

Freeburg’s fungicide program includes Priaxor (active ingredients include fluxapyroxad and pyraclostrobin) or Nexicor (active ingredients include fluxapyroxad, pyraclostrobin, and propiconazole) between the 2- to 6-leaf stage, and another application at flag leaf. “It’s more of an overall plant health package,” he says.

Olson applies one pass of Miravis Ace (active ingredients include pydiflumetofen

and propiconazole), just as the crop begins to head out. “We’ve left test strips, and even in dry years, the fungicide boosts yields,” he says.

To maximize grain production for the 2024 crop, Noll used a plant growth regulator (PGR) at flag leaf to boot stage.

“We want to raise grain, not straw,” he says. “I think that was something I missed in 2023 and could have been the difference between 127 bushel wheat and 150 bushel or better wheat.”

Final Thoughts

Although wheat acres are declining, a host of benefits remain to grow the cereal crop. Besides varying crop rotation, wheat adds carbon to the soil; breaks up disease, weed, and pest cycles; and diversifies income.

“No doubt, we’re able to generate a lot of natural carbon by including it in a corn/soybean rotation,” says Noll, who plants double-crop soybeans in stubble right after wheat harvest.

“And,” he adds, “it would be really difficult for me to move away from the income potential of soft wheat plus double-crop soybeans.”

Wheat is a grass crop, like corn. Managed as such, the yield and profit potential per acre is enticing.

“Three years ago, I was ready to swear off wheat. I could get good protein and test weight, but not yield,” Wesolowski says. “I decided to give it one more try and change a few things.” In 2023, he says, his wheat enterprise produced the best yield ever.

“It was my highest farm average ever, and I have protein and test weight to go along with it,” he says. “It is like a spring wheat farmers’ dream.” 

FIND FREEDOM IN A **FLEXIBLE** HARVEST SCHEDULE



THE CUTTING-EDGE FLEXIBILITY OF TRAITED ALFALFA COULD BE A GAME CHANGER FOR FORAGE GROWERS.

Alfalfa is an outstanding feed ingredient, even irreplaceable for many growers and producers. But managing it can be both time consuming and labor intensive. From equipment repairs to weather events, unforeseen challenges can disrupt cutting schedules when growers least expect it, and it can be difficult to adjust harvest timing without compromising production goals.

In a perfect world, alfalfa quality wouldn't decline with time, and growers and producers would be free to enjoy all the crop's redeemable rewards. Fortunately, one forage genetics leader is all in on addressing these challenges to make flexibility a reality.

GENETIC POWERHOUSE IS KEEPING ALFALFA IN THE GAME

There are many valuable reasons to keep alfalfa in the rotation. Among these reasons are the innovative efforts of Forage Genetics International (FGI). FGI is a leader in genetic research, variety developments and cutting-edge technologies with the common goal of advancing alfalfa with grower solutions. One of these cutting-edge solutions is HarvXtra® Alfalfa.

By pioneering HarvXtra Alfalfa trait technology, FGI has changed the relationship between forage quality and stage of maturity, allowing growers more flexibility with less concern for losing forage quality or yield potential.

WIDENING THE CUTTING WINDOW

For years, forage growers have been bound to a certain cutting window, no matter their personal plans, weather conditions or other conflicts. But with trait technology designed to maintain alfalfa quality, growers are freed from the stress of strict harvest timelines.

"Flexibility is provided by the trait's ability to widen the cutting window," explains Dan Undersander, former University of Wisconsin Extension forage research agronomist. "This gives growers the option to maintain their normal harvest schedule for higher quality forage, or delay harvest for [up to] 10 days for increased yield potential without sacrificing forage quality, compared to conventional alfalfa at the same stage of maturity."

THE GAME-CHANGING TRAIT

Control over cutting schedules opens the door for significant increases in the overall value of growing alfalfa. Growers can meet business objectives while reaping the rewards of increased harvest flexibility and being relieved of the obligation to bend their lives around their alfalfa.

Wisconsin farmer Reily Lepianka plants HarvXtra Alfalfa to feed his family's dairy cows. "We try to feed as much alfalfa as possible. And with HarvXtra, we cut less often. It saves us a lot," Reily says.

Plus, it gives them the priceless privilege of harvesting on a timeline that works for the family and the full operation.

"If there's bad weather, we can let it sit for another week [with no consequences]. With conventional alfalfa varieties, forage quality would drop considerably. HarvXtra totally changed the way we make hay because we don't have to be tied down to a certain rotation," Reily affirms. "With HarvXtra alfalfa, that pressure is gone, and we can cut whenever we think is right without sacrificing quality."

With this advancement in flexibility comes freedom for alfalfa growers to work around weather, life events and other crops to achieve the quality and yield their operation needs, along with the freedom to cultivate memories and enjoy the moments that matter.

Learn more about the flexibility of HarvXtra Alfalfa.





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HarvXtra Alfalfa delivers a higher RFQ and NDFd than conventional varieties cut on the same day. On average, 14-18% higher forage quality (RFQ) and NDFd across cuttings than conventional varieties harvest at the same stage of maturity. Data comes from FGI trials comparing HarvXtra Alfalfa with Roundup Ready Technology 2017 FD4 commercial varieties to FD4 commercial checks. Trials were seeded in 2013 and harvested in 2014, 2015 and 2016 in Boone, IA; Mt. Joy, PA; Nampa, ID; Touchet, WA; and West Salem, WI. Yield increase is directly correlated to the ability to delay harvest.

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BEEF PRICES ARE MOVING ON UP

Cattle and beef prices hit the stratosphere.

By **Gene Johnston**

When it comes to the cattle market at the beginning of 2024, there's good news ... and then there's more good news.

Record prices for all classes of cattle were paid in early February, and there will almost certainly be new record average prices for all of 2024, according to the cattle market experts at CattleFax, a Colorado-based outlook firm specializing in meat markets. They presented their latest report at the National Cattle Convention in Florida.

In fact, CattleFax believes these good times in cattle markets could go on for a while, maybe for the next three or four years, as ranchers rebuild cow herds to match beef demand.

Here's the price outlook CattleFax presented for 2024 by class of cattle:

- **Fed steers:** These are the finished animals, ready for harvest. They will average \$184 per hundred weight (cwt), up \$9 from 2023.

- **Feeder steers** (800 pounds): These are the animals ready to go into a feedlot for final finishing. They will average \$240/cwt, up \$20 from last year.

- **Steer calves** (550 pounds): These are the recently weaned calves, usually headed for a stocker grazing operation before they head to the feedlot. They will average \$290/cwt, up \$28 from last year.

- **Utility cows:** These are culls, and usually go for hamburger meat. They will average \$115/cwt, up \$16 from last year.

Why Are Cattle Prices So High?

Cattle numbers have been on the decline for the last few years — mostly due to drought in the cattle-heavy Plains states. While drought declined in some areas last year, it didn't everywhere. CattleFax reports that half of all beef cows were in dry-weather or full-fledged drought areas last year. Some still are, and this is limiting the ability for many producers to go into expansion mode.

The USDA cattle inventory report released in early February confirmed the continued liquidation of cows over the past year. Total cattle numbers were down 2% from one year ago, to 28 million head. Many expect the inventory number to drop again in the coming year. In fact, CattleFax CEO Randy Blach believes the peak cattle prices of this cycle may not come till 2026.

Another reason for high cattle prices comes from the demand side. Americans still love their beef, and these premium prices have not slowed that demand. Retail beef prices averaged a record \$7.90 per pound last year, for all classes of meat.

That high retail price may be one reason for caution on cattle going forward. Pork and poultry supplies are expanding this year by small amounts, and their average retail price is only about half that of beef. The experts think that at some point, consumers could turn more strongly to those alternative meats.

For producers who are thinking about expanding their cow herds to capitalize on these good prices, CattleFax says now is the time. It takes more than two years to raise a replacement heifer and get a calf out of her to get the full effect of these markets. Mike Murphy of CattleFax says bred heifers are now selling for about \$2,400. But if that cow stays productive for five or six years, that price will have been a \$1,000 or more bargain over her lifetime. 



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Rochelle and Evan Schnadt with their son, Leighton, and daughter, Ellery.

NURTURING A FARMING LIFESTYLE

Rochelle and Evan Schnadt are experimenting with new growing practices, while raising their family in the farming tradition.

By **Alex Gray**, New Products Editor
alex.gray@agriculture.com

Rochelle and Evan Schnadt have been farming in Lodi, Wisconsin, north of Madison, for the past six years, and say they have always wanted farming to be part of their story.

“We’re both farm kids: I’m from Wisconsin, and Evan’s from Iowa,” Rochelle Schnadt says. “We both grew up watching our parents share this lifestyle with us. Now that we have kids of our own, it’s very much something we want for them, too.”

Rochelle and Evan are 37 years old, and have been married nearly 11 years. Their children — Leighton, 6 years old, and his sister, Ellery, 4 years old — are farm kids through and through. The couple say they hope raising them around agriculture helps them learn skills for the future.

“The fact we are smaller and we have smaller equipment — it’s very hands-on, like how a lot of us grew up,” Evan Schnadt says. “As farms have gotten bigger, it makes

it a little less approachable for kids so young to get involved. I feel really good that we’re able to give them the ‘farm kid’ experience.”

The Schnadts largely run their farm on their own; both have their day jobs on top of farm responsibilities to help supplement their income. Evan works in dairy genetics at ABS Global in nearby DeForest. Rochelle works for C.O.nxt, an agriculture marketing communications agency west of Milwaukee.

Rochelle’s family are full-time farmers, and her brothers, Ryan and Radley Ripp, help out when needed. The Schnadts hired Ryan to plant corn, sharing some of their business with him that helps pay off his technology, and also helps speed up planting.

Forging Their Own Path

After the two got married, the Schnadts purchased their first home and first plot of farmland from Rochelle’s parents. They later purchased a nearby plot of land by taking advantage of the USDA’s Farm Service

Agency’s beginning farmer loans, as well as some loans from traditional financial institutions.

Rochelle’s parents used the land to grow traditional row crops, such as corn and soybeans, with conventional practices. Since purchasing the land, the Schnadts have been growing unique crops to mill for food and beverage production across 50 acres. They are experimenting to perfect the art of regenerative agriculture by making use of no-till and cover crops.

“As we took ownership of it, we started to forge our own path and try to add value to the land because of the price tag associated with it, so we started down the path of growing heirloom corn,” Rochelle says.

This sometimes took a frustrating amount of trial and error, Rochelle says, with a laugh. The pair started by growing small plots in their yard, to figure out what would grow well, before scaling up to full production. Evan says they have been captivated by the idea of regenerative agriculture, further complicating production.

The Schnadts approach regenerative agriculture holistically. The farm has large areas of sloping land, making no-till a no-brainer. But as they learned more about regenerative practices, they learned how they interact in a system.

“We’re used to thinking in a scientific sense, ‘If I change just one thing, what’s the net effect at the end of the day?’ People that don’t ▶

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The Schnadts use older, smaller equipment, such as their 1984 John Deere 4420 combine, on their 50-acre operation.



like no-till talk about nutrient stratification, and you'll get a few years in and need to till again," Evan says. "I think some of that is true if you don't have the cover crops or foster the soil biology. Approaching these right practices together in a systems approach is our biggest evolution."

This isn't a finished process, and Evan always has something up his sleeve, Rochelle says. The Schnadts grow on a three-year rotation of conventional soybeans, small grains, and corn, with cover crops in between, and are exploring dried beans. Only a handful of years into farming, it will take a while to settle into a cycle.

"The reality is it takes some time," Evan says. "I think we have the framework in mind, and every year we're just able to do a new piece of it. It's like investing in a 401(k). At first, it's just money out of your paycheck, but then all of a sudden you start seeing the compound interest kick in."

Smaller farms, such as theirs, are at a disadvantage compared with larger farms, and it takes creativity to compete, Evan says. Right now, the Schnadts are content with the pace of work, but see growth as inevitable, and necessary for their operation.

"We can tell we have something where we just need to keep expanding," Evan says. "As it expands," he says, "we can look for more land because we need it versus just buying

more because we're supposed to. We built our model and will scale accordingly."

Farming on a smaller tract of land has enabled them to be nimble and have lower production costs.

"We're not using the biggest or newest equipment; it's the right size for us," Rochelle says. "From a financial sustainability perspective — if you truly want to be in this for the long haul and have something to pass on to the next generation — you have to be smart with the funds you're spending and earning."

Growing a Network

Rochelle says building connections with other farmers to learn about regenerative agriculture is how curiosity became impetus. They dove into podcasts and articles, eventually joining Facebook groups, where they found support to stay the course.

"It's very much a mindset shift," Rochelle says. "You need that support group to say, 'Don't abandon ship yet; you've got this; this is what we saw; this what we lived through.' You'll get a kind of reassurance as you're scratching your head saying, 'This doesn't look great.'"

In growing their connections, the Schnadts have learned practices they've applied to their operation. Getting a longer, more diverse crop rotation, with small grains

and legumes to build soil health, has been an important part of their approach to agriculture.

Obtaining metric data has inspired confidence in their practices and guides them toward their goals. The Schnadts test their soil every year with Regen Ag Lab in Nebraska, where Evan says the team spent "way more time than it would be sustainable" to help him understand the science behind soil health.

Working outside tried-and-true farming practices presents risk, especially for new farmers. The Schnadts had their share of learning moments on their journey, mitigated by testing in small plots in their yard.

"If you're interested or curious about something, do something to get started, because with farming you get one shot a year," Evan says. "Just don't go too far too fast unless you have the means to do so. I want to go this new route, but we also recognize the traditional wisdom in the ag community about how and why things have been done."

Rochelle says they document everything, and share their story on social media.

"Now we're able to advocate and share more of the farm story, because people want to connect with the farmer and know where their food is coming from," Rochelle says. "That movement has continued to grow over the years, and we think it's important to show context about what agriculture is up to. Having context helps move the conversation forward." 



Maartje and Casey Murphy with their son, Shepherd.

ARTISANAL FLAIR BUILDS BUSINESS

Crafting quality dairy products opens door to a future on the farm.

By Raylene Nickel

When Maartje Murphy was growing up on her family's dairy farm near Carrington, North Dakota, she had no desire to join her brothers in the family business. Instead, she wanted to work as a nurse, and that's what she did after graduating from university and marrying her husband, Casey Murphy, a physiotherapist.

Somewhere along the way, she began to reconsider her earlier notion. Murphy started to appreciate the benefits of farm life. "I began asking myself a question: What's a way for me to be a part of the dairy without being involved in the actual processes of caring for and milking the cows?" she says.

Fittingly, her birthplace — the Netherlands — inspired the eventual answer to the question. Her parents had left a dairy farm there to develop a dairy in Canada. From there, they moved to North Dakota to build from scratch a new dairy. Their frequent trips home to the Netherlands to visit

family exposed Murphy to the gifts of her Dutch heritage. She translated these into the artisanal cheeses and gelato that she and her husband now process and market through their on-farm enterprise called Cows and Co. Creamery.

Wave of the Future

Inspiration for the business came from Dutch cheesemakers. "The Netherlands have lots of artisanal cheesemakers, who also make gelato," Murphy says. "I remember sitting outside a shop eating gelato and having this amazing feeling that's hard to describe. I wanted to bring that feeling back to North Dakota."

That feeling was wrapped up in Murphy's sense that artisanal, "homestead" food products were the wave of the future. She realized consumers increasingly sought to know the source of their foods.

Also, as she herself experienced in the Netherlands, she wanted to give consumers an experience of farm life. "My goal is for

people to come here to the farm and see how Gouda cheese is made and how cows are milked," she says. "I want people to see how farms are being run today. I want people to have the opportunity to enjoy farm life, even for just one day."

While Cows and Co. Creamery offers that experience to consumers now, it took time for the Murphys to develop their business to that point. They started small. In 2018, while both worked full-time at their respective medical professions, they transformed the family's garage into a small facility for making gelato. Murphy and her mother, Conny van Bedaf, had spent a week in Italy learning to make the frozen dairy dessert resembling ice cream.

At first, they made gelato on special order to serve at weddings. Word of mouth spread the news of their business, Duchessa Gelato, and demand grew. Soon they were filling enough special orders to deliver their product to cities throughout North Dakota.

As demand for gelato grew, so did the Murphys' vision of the products they could make from the milk produced by the dairy. Gouda cheese topped the list, and Murphy spent a month in the Netherlands learning how to make the semi-hard cheese. Her training complemented her mother's early apprenticeship in cheese-making in New Zealand.

Hand in hand with gaining skills, they developed the infrastructure needed to process and market their products. ▶



Maartje Murphy in the aging room of her dairy-processing facility.

Murphy. “We also sell homemade stroopwafels and have cheese and gelato to go.”

Cows and Co. Creamery now employs both of the Murphys full-time, along with van Bedaf and three additional individuals.

“My goal remains for our customers to come to the farm and enjoy farm life,” Murphy says. “I couldn’t have asked for a better life than what I’m experiencing here. We’re happy and grateful to have the business that we have now and for the potential opportunity we’re going to have in the future.”

Big Dream

Cows and Co. Creamery presently consumes and adds value to just 1% to 2% of the milk produced by the 1,500 cows in the family’s dairy.

“But our small business is building the foundation for what could become a larger family enterprise,” Murphy says. “My brothers and husband have a long-term goal of processing and marketing dairy products from all of the milk.

“My family is passionate about producing high-quality milk, and they should be the ones earning the rewards from selling the good products made from that milk. It’s a big dream and another reason I do what I do.” **SF**

Learn More

Maartje Murphy

701/650-0153

hello@cowSandCoCreamery.com

cowSandCoCreamery.com

“We bought a small, picturesque dairy farm near my parents’ farm,” Murphy says. “The farmstead had a pole barn sitting in the right spot for what we envisioned doing.”

They outfitted the 50×80-foot structure as a dairy-processing facility that also includes temperature- and humidity-controlled aging rooms for the Gouda. It also houses a café where on certain days, guests can eat the specialty foods served by Cows and Co. Creamery, a business name reflecting their expanded offering of dairy products.

A grant from the North Dakota Department of Agriculture Agricultural Products Utilization Commission provided the Murphys with financial assistance to develop the infrastructure needed to process and market products made from the family’s dairy. The grant is awarded to agricultural enterprises adding value to farm products.

Demand for their offerings continues to grow. “From the start, we’ve just continued to build our customer base,” Murphy says. “We’ve relied primarily on word of mouth, along with postings on Instagram and Facebook. From the beginning we’ve

tried to do the best we can in making a good product and providing good customer service. People remember their first experiences with us.”

That commitment to excellence landed Murphy a spot on the 2021 Forbes list of 30 Under 30 in the Food and Drink category.

“Our café is open only a few times a month, typically every other Saturday and every other Thursday evening; people have to check our website for the schedule,” she says. “When we’re open, we have as many as 500 people come to the café. They can pick up the Gouda or the freshly made gelato they may have ordered in advance from the website, and they can sit down in the café and eat our specialty foods like gelato, cheese curds, or macaroni and cheese.”

Customers come from all over North Dakota and surrounding states to visit the creamery.

The Murphys also deliver their products to locations in 10 cities to serve customers placing orders on the website. In addition, they opened a business in Fargo. “The shop in Fargo is a fresh gelato scoop shop,” says



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Paige Tuggle and her father work together on the family farm, raising cattle and growing feed.

AGRICULTURE ALL DAY

For Paige Tuggle, coming back to the farm didn't mean one career in agriculture; she has three.

By **Lisa Foust Prater**, Family & Farmstead Editor
lisa.foustprater@agriculture.com

Driving through the family farm near Ithaca, Michigan, Paige Tuggle points out the extensive system of fencing, gates, and chutes in the lots surrounding the barn and heading down a lane in the middle of the property.

“The way this facility is set up, one person can do everything that needs to be done,” Tuggle says of the property, northeast of Grand Rapids. “Dad has a full-time job. I have a full-time job off the farm. We run about a hundred head of mama cows. So that also requires a lot of time outside of working. We have to make this place doable for one person to sort cows and bring cows up.”

Having that kind of system allows Tuggle or her parents, Phil and Lisa, to be away from the farm without necessarily having to find other help. Her father travels around

Michigan as a direct-ship fertilizer salesman, and Tuggle also does some traveling for her full-time job with Stine Seed Company and her part-time crop insurance business.

The Tuggles practice synch breeding using CIDR (Controlled Intravaginal Drug Release) devices. “We bring up 20 cows at a time, put CIDRs in, give them shots, then the next week we’ll pull the CIDRs, and then that coming week they’ll come into heat, and hopefully we’ll get them all bred,” she explains. “There’s a method to our madness; it’s kind of a well-oiled machine. We have a system, and the cows know our system.” They also raise 20 to 30 bulls per year, which they sell across the state in spring.

Father-Daughter Teamwork

Tuggle says she and her father are similar and work well together. “My dad and I have worked together since I could walk,” she says, “so I usually know what he’s thinking

before he is done thinking it, and I can foresee what he needs and when he needs it and vice versa. It’s a lot of work outside of work, but cattle are our passion.”

The Tuggles grow their own feed, getting three to four cuttings of hay per year off 200 to 300 acres, and harvesting around 65 acres of corn. They chop half the corn for silage, and sell the rest at the elevator.

“We always end up producing more feed than we need, so that gives us another option for a cash flow at a different time of year,” Tuggle says. “With cows, you either cash-flow in the spring or cash-flow in the fall. So selling some hay here and there gives us another opportunity and helps with financials.”

Planning Is Key

Calving is scheduled from the third week in December to March 1, with heifers set to calve around Christmas, since everyone is home.

“We calve in the wintertime because that’s when we’re available,” Tuggle explains. “Come springtime, Dad and I are both busy with our full-time jobs, so the cows have to go to pasture, because we aren’t around as much. Once they go to the summer pasture, we just need to check on them, and they’re pretty



As a regional sales agronomist for Stine Seed Company, Paige Tuggle works with independent sales representatives such as Jake Ackley.

self-sufficient.”

Although Michigan winters can be harsh, Tuggle says: “I would rather calve when it’s frozen out because the ground is hard, and you don’t have as much sickness. In the springtime you get muddy, you get wet, and you’re battling the mud.”

While this kind of planning takes a lot of work, Tuggle says it’s necessary with everything she and her father have going on.

“It’s a lot of thinking ahead, but I need to plan 30 days in advance,” she says. “It’s important to lay out a game plan and have everything ready to go, so when that date comes, we can just do the job, because by that point, we’re already thinking several weeks ahead.”

Inspiration From Mom

As a successful crop insurance agent, Lisa Tuggle has inspired her daughter’s career path, or at least one of her multiple paths.

Lisa was working to establish her book of business throughout Michigan and Ohio when her daughters were young. “She was gone

a lot,” Tuggle says. “Back then, we didn’t have computers, so if you wanted business, you went door to door and personally had to talk to people.”

Tuggle says it was unusual for a woman — especially a mother — to have a business like this 25 years ago. Not everyone in town thought it was a good idea, but Tuggle was inspired by her mom’s hard work and perseverance. “Somehow, working full-time and growing a business like that, Mom still made sure we were taken care of,” she says. “She worked things out with my dad, and we always had clean clothes, and food on the table, and she was there for as many of our events as she could be. She’s the ultimate mom.”

After Tuggle finished college, her goal was to make a full-time living from selling crop insurance, like her mother. But she realized early how difficult this career was going to be. “Starting your own book of business is very difficult, especially starting from nothing,” she says. “It’s commission based and you only get paid once a year, so I decided I needed another full-time job. Now, crop insurance is a third income for me.”

Starting With Stine

After a few full-time stints with different companies, Tuggle became a regional sales agronomist for Iowa-based Stine. She says her farm background is a definite asset in her career, managing 11 independent sales representatives across Michigan.

“The sales reps see what I’m bringing to the table, but I don’t ever want to come off like I know it all either,” she says. “I’m only 35 years old, so I have no business telling a guy that’s 65 years old and has been selling seed for 30 years how he should or shouldn’t run his business. I tell them I’m here to help, to figure out the answers to questions, and bring them information. I even help them move seed.”

Tuggle says she enjoys working for a

company the size of Stine, which has about 400 full-time employees domestically. “I sit next to the general manager and the owner of the company at meetings, and I know that I can pick up the phone and call them at any time if I [need] to,” she says.

The Path Back to Agriculture

Whether Tuggle is working for Stine, selling crop insurance, or on the farm, all her jobs are in the field of agriculture. But that wasn’t her original plan.

“Growing up, I thought, ‘Mom and Dad work so hard, we never have vacations, we don’t get to go on spring break like all the other kids do. We have to work.’ On Saturday mornings, I was up at 7 o’clock. I didn’t get to watch cartoons. I didn’t get to sleep in. And I thought, ‘Who wants to do that? You know, why can’t we just have fun?’”

Tuggle planned to become a doctor, but while studying pre-med at Michigan State University in large East Lansing, she says: “I got homesick, so I got a job at the beef barn there and started meeting friends from the agricultural industry. Then I’d go to class with other pre-med students that I couldn’t relate to at all. I found myself being pulled between these two worlds, and I couldn’t wait to get home and work on the farm on the weekends.”

She left Michigan State for a community college closer to home, earned a business management degree from Ferris State University north of Grand Rapids, then moved back to the farm, around the corner from her parents.

Now, Tuggle works with both parents every day: with her mom on crop insurance, and her dad on the farm. “Every night we have a debriefing of the day and plan for what needs to happen the next day,” she says.

Tuggle says she plans to farm and raise cattle indefinitely, and work alongside her parents for as long as possible.

“There are a lot of people who can’t work with their family,” she concedes. “But I wouldn’t trade it for the world. And to think that almost didn’t happen because I thought I didn’t want it.” 

A New Adventure in Podcasting

This fun project lets me share farmer stories in a whole new way.

I have been a big fan of podcasts for years, from true crime, to informative, to purely entertaining series.

Living in the country means spending a lot of time driving, and listening to podcasts is a great way to pass that time. Successful Farming produces multiple podcasts, including "15 Minutes With a Farmer," which I am very excited to be hosting. It's just the right length for the drive to town!

I am having so much fun with this new endeavor. Everywhere I go, I meet the most interesting people, and now I get to introduce them to you. Every farmer has a story to tell, and sharing those stories with our readers (and now listeners) is truly the best part of my job.

My goal is to record the kind of shows I want to listen to. Some are informative and cover topics such as mental health and estate planning. Some share inspirational sto-

ries, as how Senator Charles Grassley made his way to Capitol Hill while still staying involved with the family farm.

Other episodes will – I hope! – make you laugh, as when author and large-animal veterinarian Dr. Melinda McCall shared how she came up with the title of her memoir, "Driving Home Naked."



Lisa Foust Prater

You'll also find tips and fun stories from farmers such as Annaliese Wegner and Deanne Frieders, who advocate for agriculture on social media.

If you're new to podcasts, getting started is easy. Your smartphone probably

already has a listening app installed. I drive an older vehicle that doesn't connect to my phone, so I just press "play," put the audio on speaker, and listen that way. You can subscribe to your favorite shows in the app, so new episodes are always waiting.

Each week I also share a summary of new episodes at [Agriculture.com/news/profiles](https://agriculture.com/news/profiles).

Do you know someone I should feature? Email me at lisa.foustprater@agriculture.com. Thanks for listening! •



Senator Charles Grassley shares his story with Lisa Foust Prater.



Sweet Cornmeal Shortcakes With Summer Berries

Savor the flavors of summer with this simple, old-fashioned dessert.

- 4½ cups assorted berries such as blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, and/or sliced strawberries
- 3-4 tablespoons sugar
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup cornmeal
- ¼ cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt or ⅛ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- ⅓ cup butter
- ½ cup buttermilk
- ⅓ cup whole milk
- Nonstick spray coating
- 1 cup whipping cream, whipped

1 In a medium bowl, stir together the berries and the 3 to 4 tablespoons sugar; set aside.

2 In a small bowl, combine flour, cornmeal, ¼ cup sugar, baking powder, salt, and baking soda. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Add buttermilk and milk to flour mixture. Stir just to moisten. Place six 3-inch baking ring molds on an ungreased baking sheet. Lightly coat ring molds with cooking spray. Spoon dough into ring molds. (Or, on a large ungreased baking sheet, drop dough into 12 mounds.)

3 Bake in a 350°F oven about 25 minutes for rings, or 12 to 15 minutes if using dropped dough, or until a wooden toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool in ring molds for 5 minutes. Remove from molds. Cool on a wire rack about 10 minutes. Or, remove dropped shortcakes to a wire rack to cool slightly.

4 To serve, cut ring shortcakes in half horizontally, or if using dropped dough, use 2 mounds for each serving. Spoon half of berries and whipped cream over bottom layers. Replace top layers. Top with remaining berries and whipped cream. Makes 6 servings.

Nutrition Facts (per serving): 463 cal., 26 g fat, total (16 g sat. fat), 83 mg chol., 52 g carb., 269 mg sodium, 6 g pro.

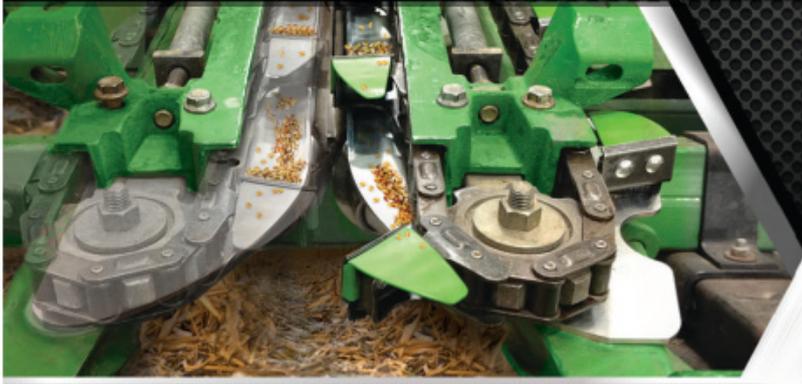
For recipe questions, email lisa.foustprater@agriculture.com. 

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Scientific Discovery Stuns Doctors

Biblical Bush Relieves Joint Discomfort in as Little as 5 Days

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According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 54 million Americans are suffering from joint discomfort.

This epidemic rise in aching joints has led to a search for alternative treatments—as many sufferers want relief without the harmful side effects of conventional “solutions.”

Leading the way from nature’s pharmacy is the new “King of Oils” that pioneering Florida MD and anti-aging specialist Dr. Al Sears calls “the most significant breakthrough I’ve ever found for easing joint discomfort.”

Biblical scholars treasured this “holy oil.” Ancient healers valued it more than gold for its medicinal properties. Marco Polo prized it as he blazed the Silk Road. And Ayurvedic practitioners, to this day, rely on it for healing and detoxification.

Yet what really caught Dr. Sears’ attention is how modern medical findings now prove this “King of Oils” can powerfully...

Deactivate 400 Agony-Causing Genes

If you want genuine, long-lasting relief for joint discomfort, you must address inflammation. Too much inflammation will wreak havoc on joints, break down cartilage and cause unending discomfort. This is why so many natural joint relief solutions try to stop one of the main inflammatory genes called COX-2.

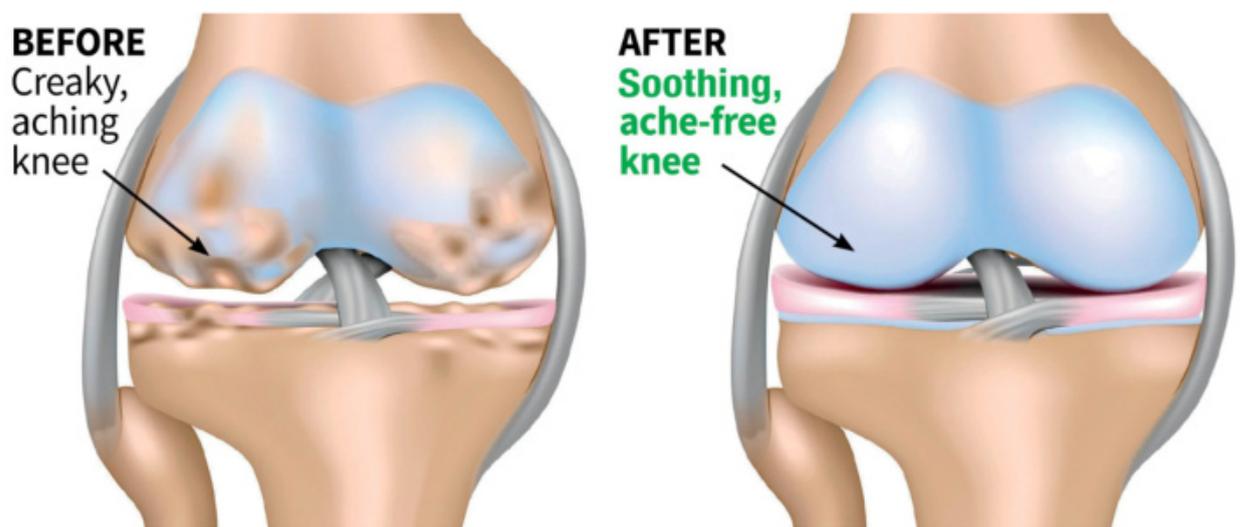
But the truth is, there are hundreds of agony-causing genes like COX-2, 5-LOX, iNOS, TNF, Interleukin 1,6,8 and many more—and stopping just one of them won’t give you all the relief you need.

Doctors and scientists now confirm the “King of Oils”—Indian Frankincense—deactivates not one but 400 agony-causing genes. It does so by shutting down the inflammation command center called Nuclear Factor Kappa Beta.

NK-Kappa B is like a switch that can turn 400 inflammatory genes “on” or “off.” A study in *Journal of Food Lipids* reports that Indian Frankincense powerfully deactivates NF-Kappa B. This journal adds that Indian Frankincense is “so powerful it shuts down the pathway triggering aching joints.”

Relief That’s 10 Times Faster... and in Just 5 Days

Many joint sufferers prefer natural solutions but say they work too slowly. Take the best-seller glucosamine. Good as it is, the National Institutes of Health reports that glucosamine



The active ingredient in Mobilify soothes aching joints in as little as 5 days

takes as long as eight weeks to work.

Yet in a study published in the *International Journal of Medical Sciences*, 60 patients with stiff knees took 100 mg of Indian Frankincense or a placebo daily for 30 days. Remarkably, Indian Frankincense “significantly improved joint function and relieved discomfort in as early as five days.” That’s relief that is 10 times faster than glucosamine.

78% Better Relief Than the Most Popular Joint Solution

In another study, people suffering from discomfort took a formula containing Indian Frankincense and another natural substance or a popular man-made joint solution every day for 12 weeks.

The results? Stunning! At the end of the study, 64% of those taking the Indian Frankincense formula saw their joint discomfort go from moderate or severe to mild or no discomfort. Only 28% of those taking the placebo got the relief they wanted. So Indian Frankincense delivered relief at a 78% better clip than the popular man-made formula.

In addition, in a randomized, double blind, placebo controlled study, patients suffering from knee discomfort took Indian Frankincense or a placebo daily for eight weeks. Then the groups switched and got the opposite intervention. Every one of the patients taking Indian Frankincense got relief. That’s a 100% success rate—numbers unseen by typical solutions.

In addition, BMJ (formerly the *British Medical Journal*) reports that Indian Frankincense is safe for joint relief — so safe and natural you can

take it every day.

Because of clinically proven results like this, Dr. Sears has made Indian Frankincense the centerpiece of a new natural joint relief formula called **Mobilify**.

Great Results for Knees, Hips, Shoulders and Joints

Joni D. says, “**Mobilify** really helps with soreness, stiffness and mild temporary pain. The day after taking it, I was completely back to normal—so fast.” Shirley M. adds, “Two weeks after taking **Mobilify**, I had no knee discomfort and could go up and down the staircase.” Larry M. says, “After a week and a half of taking **Mobilify**, the discomfort, stiffness and minor aches went away... it’s almost like being reborn.” And avid golfer Dennis H. says, “I can attest to **Mobilify** easing discomfort to enable me to pursue my golfing days. Definitely one pill that works for me out of the many I have tried.”

How to Get Mobilify

To secure the hot, new **Mobilify** formula, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at **1-800-329-8434** TODAY. “It’s not available in retail stores yet,” says Dr. Sears. “The Hotline allows us to ship directly to the customer.” Dr. Sears feels so strongly about **Mobilify**, all orders are backed by a 100% money-back guarantee. “Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days from purchase date, and I’ll send you all your money back.”

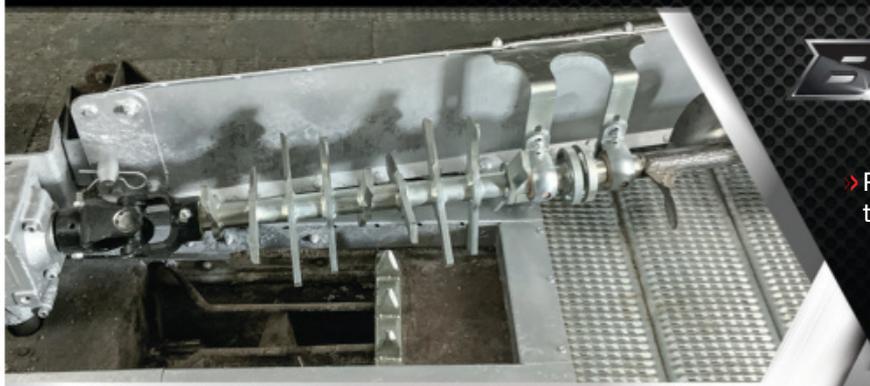
Use Promo Code **SFMB724** when you call to secure your supply of **Mobilify**. Lines are frequently busy and due to heightened demand, supplies are limited. To secure your supply today, call **1-800-329-8434**.

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New Blood Flow Breakthrough Helps Men Enjoy Strong, Long-Lasting Intimacy – At Any Age

Men across America are raving about a newly enhanced potency supplement that helps achieve healthy blood flow on demand

After age 40, it's common knowledge that performance begins to decline in many men. However, a new, performance empowering pill is showing that any relatively healthy man can now enjoy long-lasting, and frequent intimacy – at any age.

This doctor-designed formula, created by leading anti-aging expert Dr. Al Sears, has already helped men overcome low and sinking libido -- and has recently undergone a potency-enhancing update – with remarkable new results.

When the first pill -- **Primal Max Black** -- was first released, it quickly became a top-selling men's performance helper, promoting intimacy across America.

It worked by supporting healthy testosterone levels. However, Dr. Sears soon realized that this isn't the only challenge men face with performance. That's when he turned his attention to blood flow.

And this became **Primal Max Red**.

THIS PROVEN SOLUTION IS MORE MECHANICAL THAN HORMONAL

Truth is, once blood flow slows down for men, no matter how exciting it is, it won't be enough without the necessary amount...

So enjoying intimacy without healthy blood flow becomes difficult for most men.

Luckily, a Nobel prize-winning scientist discovered the simple answer to help support performance strength and confidence -- by boosting vital blood flow -- and enhancing this essential

performance function.

Using this landmark Nobel Prize as its basis, **Primal Max Red** enhanced healthy blood flow for untold millions of men around the world with the use of strong nitric oxide boosters.

While **Primal Max Black** helped maintain optimal testosterone, **Primal Max Red** tackles a lesser-known challenge.

Director, Al Sears MD, who has authored over 500 scientific papers and has appeared on more than 50 media outlets including ABC News, CNN, ESPN, Discovery, Lifetime, and many more say, *“Less than optimal blood flow can be part of a huge problem that affects a lot of men. And it needed to be addressed once and for all, so men would not dwell on it. Then, once we optimized it and had a great deal of success, we set out to see if we could do even better.”*

The former formula had excellent results. However, new research showed that for even faster, anytime, anywhere results, increasing the dose of a key compound was needed.

So, one of the three nitric oxide boosters in the new **Primal Max Red**, L-Citrulline, was clinically boosted to 9000 mg, and the results were astounding. Which is no surprise considering that 5000 mg is considered a “normal amount” -- giving the new version nearly doubled the blood flow boosting power.

Men who had previously been unsure about their power and stamina were overjoyed to be back to their old selves and to get and maintain a healthy bloodflow when they needed it.



A new discovery that increases nitric oxide availability was recently proven to boost blood flow 275% - resulting in improved performance.

BETTER BLOOD FLOW, STRONGER RESULTS

The best way to promote healthy blood flow throughout the body is with the use of **Primal Max Red**. By using it, when exciting signals leave the brain, blood flows much faster like it used to.

This critical action is how men across the country are enjoying full and satisfying performance at any age. No need to bother with testosterone-boosting shots, blue pills, or shady capsules that have no effect.

Primal Max Red can effectively promote healthy blood flow that most men can use for maximum intimacy. This is leading to more greater capacity and satisfaction, coupled with long-lasting performance.

“There was a time when men had little control when it came to boosting their blood flow,” Dr. Sears said. “But science has come a long way in recent years. And now, with the creation of nitric oxide-boosting **Primal Max Red**, men can perform better than ever, and enjoy intimacy at any

age.”

Now for men across America, it's much easier to stay at their performance peak as they get older.

HOW TO GET PRIMAL MAX RED (AND FREE PRIMAL MAX BLACK):

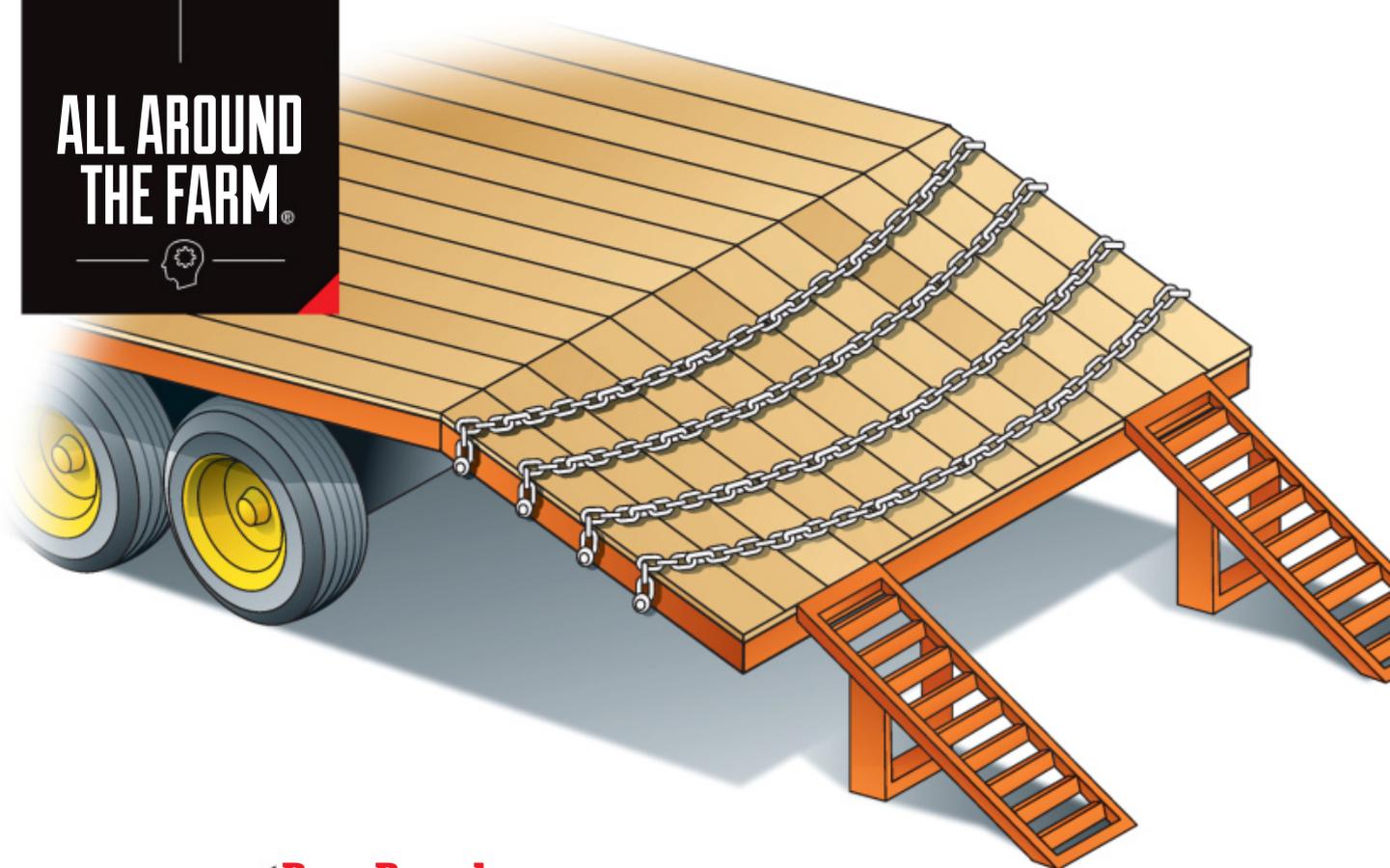
To secure free bottles of **Primal Max Black** and get the hot, new **Primal Max Red** formula, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at **1-800-450-3201** TODAY. “It's not available in retail stores yet,” says Dr. Sears. “The Hotline allows us to ship directly to the customer.” Dr. Sears feels so strongly about **Primal Max**, all orders are backed by a 100% money-back guarantee. “Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days from purchase date, and I'll send you all your money back.”

Call NOW at **1-800-450-3201** to secure your supply of **Primal Max Red** and free bottles of **Primal Max Black**. Use Promo Code **SFPMAX724** when you call. Lines are frequently busy, but all calls will be answered!

► **Better Trailer Loading Traction**

We love our dovetail equipment trailer, but unfortunately, the drop end can get very slippery. To solve this problem, we use hold-down chains, spaced appropriately, to improve traction. The chains allow us to load motorized equipment with ease.

John D. Rohrer
Watertown, Wisconsin



◀ **Burn Barrel**

Over the years, I have had to scrap multiple 55-gallon burn barrels due to rust damage. The thin gauge of these barrels simply does not hold up under repeated heating and weathering cycles.

Our local road department had accumulated a sizable pile of scrap culverts. I obtained some 24-inch-diameter, 14-gauge pieces, cut to 3 to 4 feet in length. I cut some air vents, as illustrated, and the barrels were ready for use.

Richard Peters
St. Marys, Kansas

▼ **Leak Finder**

If you are like most people, you have probably had an unexpected leak in a buried water line. With the leak hard to locate, I decided to try using air pressure to replace the water in the line, hoping I would hear air coming from the leaking area. It worked incredibly well!

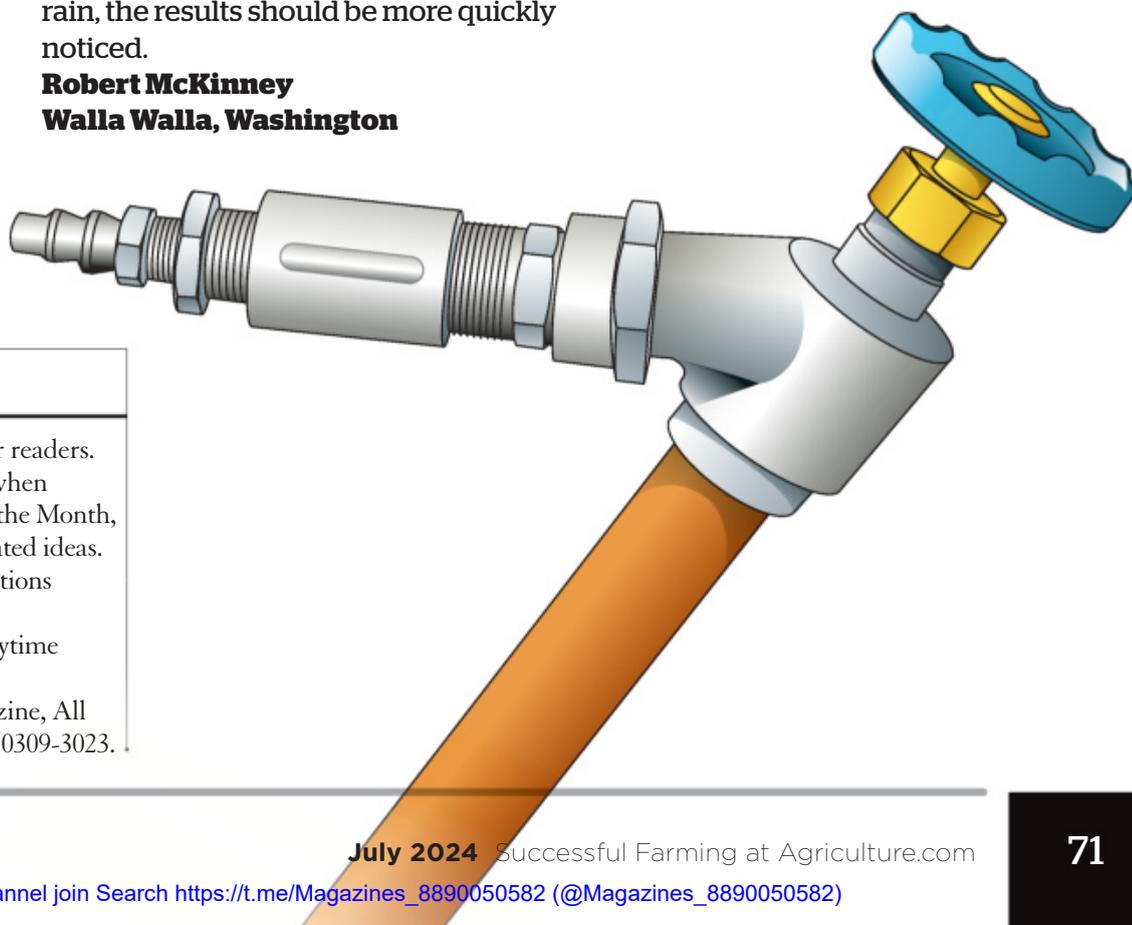
I made an air chuck adapter and attached it to a water spigot. I used a pressure regulator to avoid putting too much pressure into the water lines. If the ground is saturated from the leak or from rain, the results should be more quickly noticed.

Robert McKinney
Walla Walla, Washington

Key Chuck Loss Prevention

To avoid misplacing the key chuck for my drill press, I purchased a spring-loaded key return designed for a pants belt. I fastened a rubber bottle stop around the neck of the key chuck, attached the chuck to the end of the key return, and mounted the device to the drill press. No more lost key chuck!

Glenn Gehring
Menomonie, Wisconsin



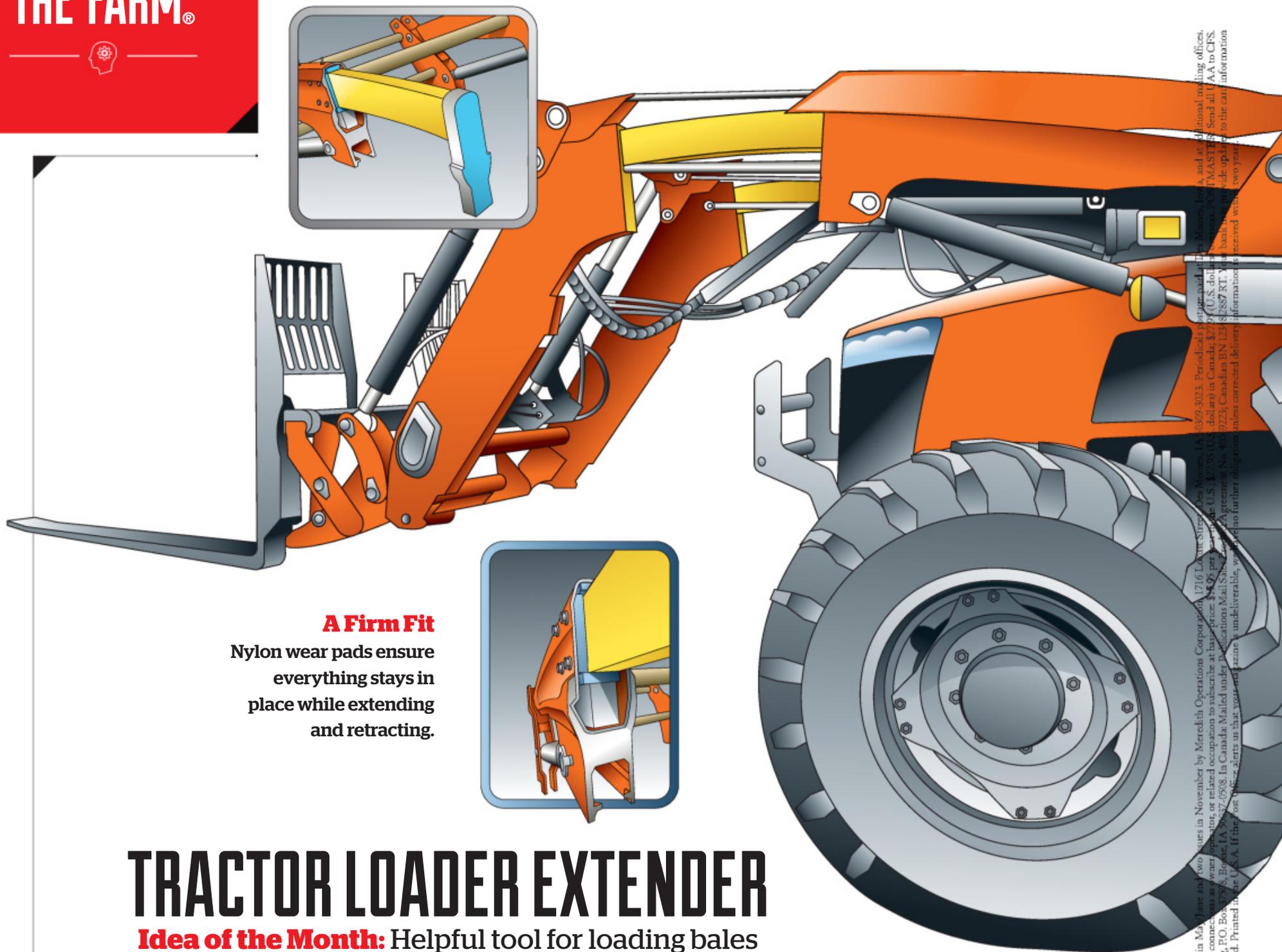
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Successful Farming magazine invites you to share ideas with our readers. Submissions should be precise. Include a sketch or photograph when needed. If your idea is used in print, we pay \$400 for the Idea of the Month, \$200 for ideas that appear with drawings, and \$100 for unillustrated ideas. All material submitted becomes the property of Meredith Operations Corporation. If your idea is used, you give Meredith Operations Corporation the right to use it in any manner. Enter idea(s), a daytime phone number, email address, and complete mailing address at Agriculture.com/ideaentry or mail to Successful Farming Magazine, All Around The Farm, 1716 Locust Street/LS257, Des Moines, IA 50309-3023.



Extended Reach

The tractor hydraulics extend the front section by 2 feet.



A Firm Fit
Nylon wear pads ensure everything stays in place while extending and retracting.

TRACTOR LOADER EXTENDER

Idea of the Month: Helpful tool for loading bales

By **Cory Hall**

Larry Williams loads a large number of hay bales on his Texas farm. When asked why he designed, built, and patented this idea, he says: “I was getting frustrated with trying to load semis and having to push on the load. That can be hard on the bales. I decided to build a loader that made it much easier on the hay — and on my patience.”

He cut both legs of his front-end loader in half, just in front of the lift cylinder pin point. Then, he fabricated two 1½-inch-thick steel plates

to fit inside the rear legs’ hollow parts. To allow for a firm fit while extending and retracting the unit, he fitted nylon wear pads inside the rear legs on their tops, bottoms, and both sides. The steel plate’s front end is welded to the rear of the loader’s front section.

Hydraulic cylinders are mounted on the inside of the rear legs. One end of the cylinder is attached to the rear legs, and the other end is attached to the front section. The tractor’s factory hydraulics power the hydraulic cylinders. Pulling the lever in the cab extends the front section by 2 feet. This process can be performed while the loader is in a vertical or horizontal position. 

Larry Williams

Beckville, Texas
Farming Operation: Williams operates a 10-acre Coastal Bermuda grass haying operation.

Family: Married to Pam with one son, three stepchildren, and four grandchildren.
Hobbies: Williams and his wife like to go camping in their fifth-wheel camper. Pam is a national championship clogger, and they travel the circuit. She clogs, and he helps emcee the shows.

Email: liwilliams81@gmail.com

Phone: 903-235-9090



◀ More ideas from readers on page 71.

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समय पत्रिका साधनापथग हलकषमी उदयइंडिया नरिंगधाम मॉडर्न खेतीइंडिया टुडेदेवपुत्र
कुरकिट टुडेग हशोभा अर्नखीहनिदुस्तानमुक्ता सरति चंपक परतयोगिता दरपण सक्सेस मरि
सामान्य ज्ञान दरपण फारम एवं फुड मनोहर कहानियां सत्यकथा सरस सललि स्वतंत्र वार्ता लाजवाब आउटलुकसचची शकिषावनति
मायापुरी रूपायन उजाळा ऋषि पुरसाद जोश रोजगार समाचार जोश करंट अफेयर्स जोश सामान्य ज्ञान जोश बैकग और एसएससी
इंडिया बुक ऑफरकिरड्सपरक् तमिल
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