

Pushing Straw Yields

Variety selection is probably the first and maybe only factor you think of when looking to increase straw yield. On the gocereals.ca website most of the variety trials include straw yield as a (measurable trait) characteristic. You have likely noticed that the tallest variety does not always have the highest straw yield nor does it always have the worst lodging score, it would be much simpler if that was always the case. No matter which variety you like to grow you can increase grain and straw yield by **reducing stress to keep plants healthy**.

The most important factor of course is **healthy soil**, it allows for a more consistent supply of nutrients and water. Don't forget a well-balanced fertility program is critical to healthy soils. Second is good **crop rotation** to reduce the potential for disease and insects. Third is the use of **fungicides** at high risk growth stages such as early vegetative growth during warm spring rains (T1), flag leaf emergence (T2) and flowering (T3). Not all crops need all three stages of fungicides and weather during these stages is important of course. On the gocereals.ca website they have wheat and oat yield index summaries under intensive management comparing with and without fungicides at the T1 and T3 stages showing an increase in yield with the use of fungicides. There is also an oat lodging score under intensive management showing a drastic improvement in standability where fungicides have been used. We only wish they had included straw yield from these comparisons as well.

Soybean Management

Soybean yields in Central Ontario have been steadily increasing over the last decade, but appear to be reaching a plateau. What can we do to continue to increase yields, and best manage our soybean crops in 2020? Research done by the Ontario Ministry of Food and Agriculture has identified a few aspects of production that will help soybean producers continue to be successful and profitable going forward.

- **Fertility-** Soybeans respond well to fertilizer, especially potassium. However, research has shown that they will produce the best in soils that have a high base fertility level. This can provide a benefit to producers who focus on building soil levels instead of just replacing what the crop took out.
- **Disease Resistance-** As soybeans become more prevalent in Ontario rotations, diseases like Soybean Cyst Nematode, white mould, and phytophthora root rot are becoming more common. Remember to select varieties with good disease resistance packages, especially if these diseases are issues that you have had in the past.
- **Weed Pressures-** The issue of weed control is becoming much more complicated in Ontario soybean production. As herbicide resistant weeds continue to spread, the use of pre-emerge herbicides with residual activity is fast becoming the best strategy to keep weeds out of your soybean fields. It is also important to mix multiple modes of action into every spray application to prevent further resistance from occurring.

The Importance of Record Keeping

The modern farm has become a very complicated and intricate business. A large percentage of farms now handle more than half a million dollars in cash over the course of a year. Farmers receive information from a number of outside advisors, such as agronomists, nutritionists, bankers and accountants. Without a proper record keeping system in place to track and store this information, it can become very easy to misplace. Not only are external records important to keep, but records of what has happened on your farm can also be very helpful. Things like fertilizer and chemical application records can be used to aid in the next years decision making, as well as provide proof of what you have been doing in the case of a food safety audit. Information such as crop planting dates and conditions can help make spraying decisions. There are a number of other reasons that could be mentioned, but the bottom line is that farms are businesses, and a good record keeping system is a vital part of keeping them running smoothly. If you do not currently have a system in place, we would encourage you to check out one of the many programs available today, including Holmes Agro's own MyFarm platform.

"Watch It Grow" Signs

As many of you might have seen in your travels Holmes Agro has "Watch It Grow" signs to help promote awareness of local agriculture and education about the crops grown in our geographic. If you would like a sign, please let us know and we can set something up for you.



4R Certification: Orangeville

Holmes Agro is excited to announce that the Orangeville location has been certified as a 4R retailer by Fertilizer Canada. The 4R program aims to promote sustainability through fertilizer best management practices. By using the Right fertilizer, at the Right time, and the Right rate, in the Right Place, farmers can ensure that they are getting the most efficient use out of their inputs, and maintaining the quality of their land. By becoming a certified retailer, Holmes Agro has shown through a 3rd party audit that we have taken this approach to heart, and are ready to help our customers be as efficient and profitable as they can be, while maintaining their land, and the environment for generations to come.

Boots on the Ground with Corn and Soybeans

The first half of May posed cool temperatures which delayed emergence of early planted corn and soybeans. With the heat wave that came through in the second half of May, along with the rain received in some areas, we finally had excellent conditions for corn and soybeans to start emerging. In some cases, some fields started emerging 3 weeks after planting. The fields planted after the cold snap have been germinating quickly and evenly. Now that crops are emerging, it will be important to keep a look out for weed pressure in fields slotted for a post emerge herbicide program.



Start Clean, Stay Clean – The Advantage of Early Weed Control

We all understand the impact weeds can have on a crop – reduced yields and the potential for significant trouble at harvesting time. Weeds compete for light, water and nutrients, and, in fact, the presence of weeds can influence that way a crop grows. Plants have the ability to detect competitors, and subsequently, their growth pattern changes to compensate, meaning the crop focuses itself on height, for example, rather than seed production – as it instinctively strives to gain the most resources. Research has established ‘critical weed free periods’ of crop development, where yields can otherwise be impacted 50-60% by the presence of weeds. For most field crops, this critical period is in the first four weeks post-emergence. Specifically, for corn, the critical period is from emergence until the development of six leaves, and in soybeans, emergence to third trifoliolate. Further studies suggest:

- If the crop is kept weed-free for the Critical Weed-free Period, no yield reduction should occur.
- Weeds emerging after the Critical Weed-Free Period will not affect yield.

What to do?

- There are many situations where a fall burn-down is insufficient to control weeds during the critical growth periods, and pre-plant/pre-emerge residuals may not do the trick either. It is essential that crops are scouted carefully during the critical period so that herbicide decisions can be made in a timely manner to avoid later and less effective applications.

Returns for the 2020 Season

We are still accepting returns this year for any unopened, undamaged seed bags, skids, bulk bags or unopened chemical jugs. Due to COVID-19 we do ask the following:

1. If we are picking up returns at your site, we prefer if you can be there to help load. If you cannot be, please leave returns out for us, and if required, we will ask for approval to use your equipment. Our staff are still following procedures to sanitize and maintain distance at this time.
2. If you are bringing returns back to any of our locations, please ensure all products are on a skid to help ease with the unloading process. If items are not on a skid, we will ask you to unload yourself and items can be placed on a skid our employees will bring over.
3. Returns are due back by June 15th.



Clean Farms - Empty Container and Bag Collection Postponed

This year's collection of empty agricultural container and bag collection has been postponed until July 1, in accordance with current indications from public health officials and to allow agricultural retailers to focus on providing other essential services to growers. CleanFARMS has requested that growers store their empty containers and bags on the farm, and can get empty CleanFARMS bags from Holmes Agro or other ag retailers free of charge. Please continue triple rinsing/pressure rinsing containers and removing caps/booklets, and ensure that the bags are kept closed and sheltered from weather and pests. Thank you for your understanding and co-operation!

Calendar 2021

It's never too early to start sending in pictures for the 2021 calendar. We are proud to be able to provide a calendar full of grower pictures year after year – all thanks to your great submissions! Please email your photos to nicole@holmesagro.com

***** Please email nicole@holmesagro.com to sign up for our e-newsletter *****