

Corn-Sorghum Balance Point

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Over the past 20 years we have seen significant changes in corn genetics which have allowed many producers in our region of Kansas to plant corn even in non-irrigated settings. But there is some point where water becomes limiting enough that one has to give a nod to grain sorghum for having a higher yield potential or at least a higher profit potential. I've seen some agronomists use as low as 14 to as high as 18 to 20 the inches of water, either soil moisture, rainfall or irrigation or a combination, to make the decision to break between corn or sorghum. That number seems to change depending on which state's extension agronomists you are listening to. But we also have to take into account historical yields on any given field as well as production costs of value of the crop being grown. It's a given that sorghum will have lower production costs, on average. Most of the number crunching that I have seen seems to place yield to be the most critical factor. If you can produce 97 to 110 bushel of corn per acre, or more, then no doubt, you should grow corn. The bigger the spread between the price of corn and sorghum, the lower it pushed the corn yield. The closer the two came in price, the more corn you needed to grow to make it more profitable. I think we have tended to move towards corn and soybeans because of the ease of roundup ready technology. But as time goes on, we need to be spending more time pushing the pencil and we may find that we need to be including more milo. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

National Ag Week

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. This is national ag week. One week out of the year when we are supposed to be recognize and celebrate the importance of agriculture to us. I fully support taking a day or a week to do this, but at the same time I scoff at it. If you aren't celebrating agriculture and the American farmer every time you open your mouth and stick anything in it, then you are not paying attention to the simple facts. The simple fact is this, if it weren't for American agriculture you'd be in pretty darn tough shape. I have often said that the biggest problem in America is that we haven't gone hungry often enough. Far too much of the world will go to bed hungry tonight. In 1910, 1 out of every 3 workers in the labor force were farmers. You can probably double that to include processing and getting food from the field to the table. Over half the population was directly involved in getting you your meals every day. Today it is less than 1 in 33 workers doing the same thing. Which means that the other 32 workers are doing other things. As a population we worry about whether or food is organic or not. Was the chicken free range and was the beef grass fed. Was the corn GMO or non GMO and what was the country of origin of the grapes. We worry about these things because we aren't worried about going hungry. So today, and tomorrow and every single day when you sit down to eat your meals, take a moment to quietly say thank you to the farmers and ranchers of the United States that make sure that you have all those choices when you walk down the aisles of the grocery store! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Starter Fertilizer and Corn

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. In corn, perhaps more so than in any other of our crops, we need to be using starter fertilizer. We plant corn in far colder soils than any other crop except oats, if you still plant oats that is. Cold soils don't act the same way as warm soils. Nutrients are slower to be taken up by plants roots and plants themselves act differently. Our rule of thumb for most crops is that if you have soil test levels over 20 ppm of phosphate, adding more phosphorus is a waste of time and money. Yet in corn, time and time again we see corn planted in soil that has phosphorus test levels of 20 to 30 ppm respond very favorably to starter fertilizer. And absolutely when we have some nitrogen in that starter mix there's a lot better growth response. Amazingly it doesn't take all that much starter fertilizer to make a significant difference. Thirty pounds of nitrogen and 15 pounds of phosphorus is probably going to maximize yield response. The one caveat in that is that this starter fertilizer should not be in-furrow. There's not a lot of difference between a 2 x 2 placement of starter versus a surface band however. If you have to put the starter in furrow, limit the nitrogen to no more than 15 pounds as more than that will cause seedling stand issues. But basically, take the time, nearly without regard to soil phosphorus levels, to apply that starter fertilizer where the seedlings can grab on to it early. Oh, as for potassium, even though we probably don't need any, adding 5 to 10 pounds of potassium sure isn't going to hurt. Due to compaction we sometimes see short term K issues, so go ahead and add it! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.