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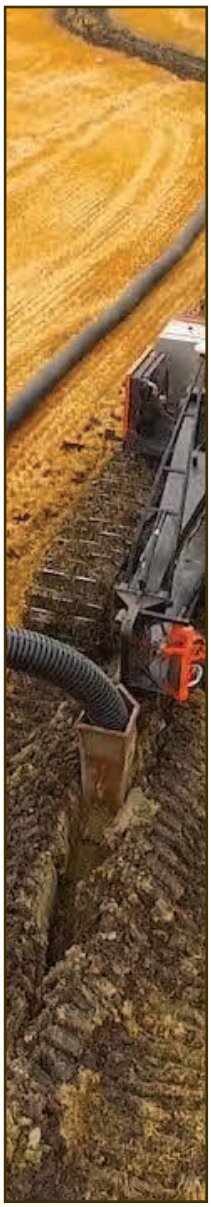
FLANAGAN State Bank

Organic AG Newsletter

MARCH 2022

What is the Value of Tiling?



In the world of farming, producers are always looking to maximize every aspect of their farm business. We have found that drainage tile has been a great way to maximize equipment and acres. Using existing equipment to install drainage tile yourself in the off-season can maximize labor, equipment, and acres.

Drainage tile has been around for over 150 years in the United States. Tile functions the same as it did many years ago, but with today's modern technology, tile can be installed very easily and cost-effectively.

Drainage tile is simply the best way to grow more bushels on less acres. By removing excess water from the soil profile, the drainage tile is creating a better growing environment for the crop and producing better yields. Drainage tile is a high output, low input investment that provides a return year over year for many years.

The obvious benefit to drainage tile is historically the improved yields. We noted a 6.7BPA soybean yield increase on a farm in 2021 that was freshly tiled on a portion of it. A driveway cuts through the farm providing a nice comparison as the north portion was tiled but the south portion was not. We managed the field exactly the same except for the tile. We will continue to monitor that tiled area year over year to see the benefits. A hidden benefit of drainage tile is the ability to do field work earlier because the farm is drier. Being able to plant a field of beans a week earlier can result in a nice yield bump. In an organic cropping system, this is incredibly important for crop emergence, weed control passes, etc... Wet areas of a farm lead to high weed pressure. Returns on commercial cropland are not as quick but still is a very positive ROI. Tile does provide a very quick ROI as it is an asset that starts working immediately, and works 24/7.

Working Together:

A neighborhood tile project usually brings producers to work together to make a project happen. This has been a very positive experience to work alongside a neighbor and get to know them better. It helps build trust and relationships.

(cont. pg. 2)

In This Issue

FSB Locations

301 W. Falcon, Flanagan

403 State, Benson

2401 E. Washington, Bloomington

111 N. Fayette, El Paso

500 S. Persimmon, Le Roy

208 E. Gridley, Gridley

What is the Value of Tiling? (cont)

Do It Yourself:

Tile has a great ROI and is exponentially faster if you can install it yourself. We had an interest in drainage tile and wanted to be able to install tile ourselves. In the fall of 2019, we started tiling our own acres. This has been beneficial as it can be done in the off-season and can utilize some equipment that is already on the farm. A few of these pieces of equipment are items that may already be on your farm, and some are specific to drainage tile. We learned AgLeader SMS Water Management through hands-on learning, YouTube, and online help videos from AgLeader. We aim to have wheat in our crop rotation each year so we can tile after the wheat is harvested and then have a few projects lined up for the winter months.

Our Tile Equipment Lineup:

- CNH540 QuadTrac – pulls drawbar tile plow
- SoilMax Gold Digger plow with 4",6", and 8" boots
- AGLeader 1200 monitor with RTK & SMS Water Management Software
- CAT 420D backhoe, 4x4, extend-a-hoe
- CAT 262B skid steer for covering up dig holes
- John Deere 835I Gator with full RTK for marking out tile lines, topography maps
- Wayne's tandem axle stringer cart with wireless brake remote control
- O'Connell Super Closer – 4 disc trench closer
- Maverick – 650' 3/8 fiberglass/plastic composite copper rod tile locator

Advantages:

- Triple payoff through appreciation, depreciation, and asset improvement
- Improved yield = Improved APH
- Dry field = plant earlier
- Better plant nutrient uptake
- Work with neighbors to benefit all

Disadvantages:

- Creates a lot of work in the off-season
- Labor-intensive work – 5 person crew is ideal
- Outlets can be a challenge depending on slope, downstream tile size, etc…

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Organic farming with precision

Precision has been a large growing division within the agriculture industry over the last couple of decades. There have been major strides in auto guidance, product control, and product monitoring; however, the largest stride comes in the form of easing the workload for growers in many circumstances. While precision products help improve the efficiency and effectiveness for many growers, the benefit toward organic farmers specifically stands out.

Organic farming takes a lot of strategy and execution when considering the steps taken to produce a viable crop while limiting some of the resources to do so. A common practice for weed control is row cultivating crops. This practice can occur several times throughout the growing season depending on the situation. It also can have a detrimental effect on the crop if done improperly. A major contributor to this process is auto guidance specifically with RTK sub-inch corrections. Various local organic farmers utilize RTK to be able to have repeatability on row crops. This allows them to accurately navigate their tractor down the rows without damaging any of the crops and maximizing the working width of the cultivator between the rows. It also creates the opportunity to precisely shift where the row of crops will grow year after year which can help with the strategy of cover crops or other nutrient management scenarios.

Many farmers and service personnel in agriculture production will say that the planter is the most important piece of equipment on the farm. Especially in recent years, numerous products have come out to enhance planting procedures. Some precision products have been around for quite a while. Rate and section control allows growers to know exactly how much they are planting and where its being planted. This results in savings on seed and not having to cut out overplant on point rows or headlands. Farmers can also utilize it to change populations based on soil types or yield maps from the previous year. Other relatively newer precision products include hydraulic downforce and furrow monitoring. Hydraulic downforce seamlessly changes the pressure on the row unit based on results from the gauge wheels. In doing so, the row unit has a better ride and more consistent depth. This can be a key matter when planting over cover crops as they tend to make the surface and seedbed uneven to try and plant in to. Furrow monitoring can also have an impact on planting into a cover crop or field with plenty organic matter. In utilizing this, the operation can make adjustments to ensure the seed is in adequate moisture and the furrow acts as a clean seedbed.

Making changes and adding precision equipment can help produce better crops, but it could all still be a guessing game if the data cannot be retrieved from it. Yield monitoring on combines can help point to problem areas and justify certain upgrades on production equipment. In doing so, yield monitors can cut the guessing game down to real data to help create a strategy moving forward. Combining yield data and other sources like soil maps can generate a number of plans to utilize precision products effectively.

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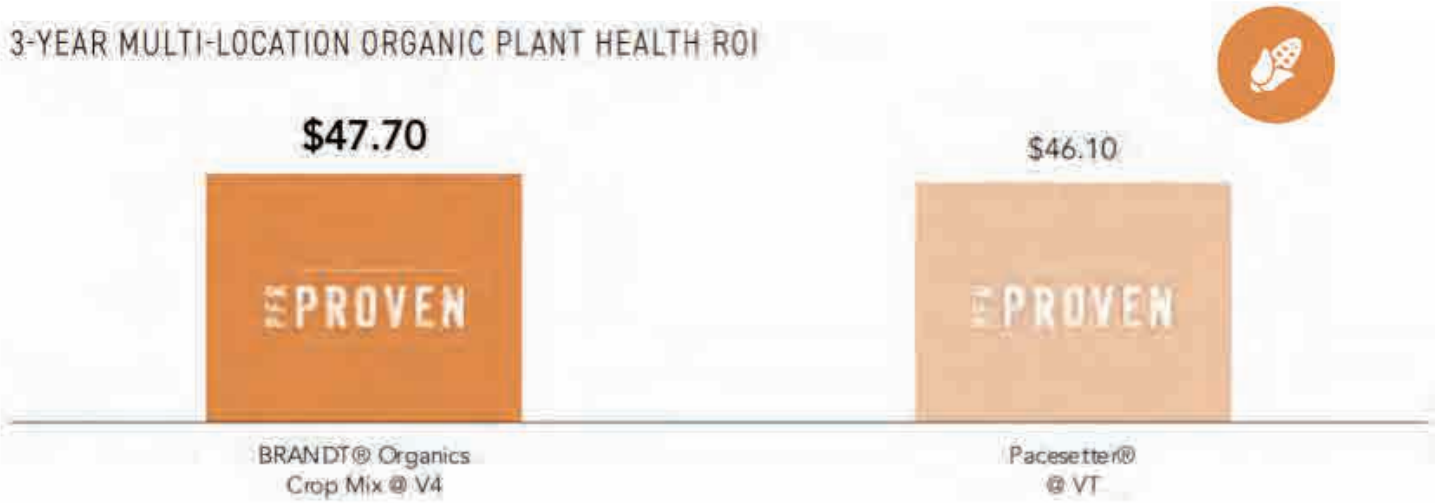
This article is a follow-up to the article published in the November 2021 issue of Flanagan State Bank's Organic Ag Newsletter. With the 2021 growing season behind us and the 2022 planting season right around the corner, lets look at the results from the organic studies carried out by Beck's Hybrids Practical Farm Research in 2021.

Organic Plant Health Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate different organic products and their effect on yield and profitability. Pacesetter™ is a bio-based plant health product and BRANDT® Organics Crop Mix is a micronutrient blend. After three years of testing, both products have achieved PFR ProvenTM status. For a product or practice to become PFR Proven, it needs to have been tested for a minimum of three years at multiple locations, it must provide a positive yield gain each year, and it must average a positive return on investment over the three-year period.



(pg. 265, 2021 Beck's Practical Farm Research)

(pg. 270, 2021 Beck's Practical Farm Research)

(cont. pg. 4)

Organic Nitrogen Management Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate Chilean nitrate, applied at various timings, and its effect on yield and profitability. The additional nitrogen has shown a positive yield increase for each treatment over the past two years, although the ROI has not been positive for every treatment.

2021 RESULTS

TREATMENTS	PERCENT MOISTURE	BU./A.	BU./A. DIFFERENCE	RETURN ON INVESTMENT
Control: 3 Ton/A. Chicken Litter	21.0	182.8	–	–
Control + 50 lb. Allganic™ Nitrogen Plus 15-0-2 2x2x2 + 100 lb. Allganic™ Nitrogen Plus 15-0-2 @ V4	21.1	200.1	+17.3	+$89.35
Control + 150 lb. Allganic™ Nitrogen Plus 15-0-2 @ V4	20.9	188.7	+5.9	-$18.95
Control + 100 lb. Allganic™ Nitrogen Plus 15-0-2 @ V4 + 100 lb. Allganic™ Nitrogen Plus 15-0-2 360 Y-DROP® @ VT	20.9	195.9	+13.1	+$24.45
Control + 50 lb. Allganic™ Nitrogen Plus 15-0-2 2x2x2 + 100 lb. Allganic™ Nitrogen Plus 15-0-2 @ V4 + 100 lb. Allganic™ Nitrogen Plus 15-0-2 360 Y-DROP® @ VT	21.9	209.9	+27.1	+$132.45

Corn $9.50/Bu. Allganic™ Nitrogen Plus 15-0-2 $0.50/lb. These results are based on the disclosed study parameters and participating sites.

(pg. 266, 2021 Beck's Practical Farm Research)

2

Organic Insecticide Study – Corn Borer

The purpose of this study is to evaluate an organic insecticide for corn borer protection and its effect on yield and profitability. Foliar applications were made after the first-generation hatch and again after the second-generation hatch. This year, neither site experienced heavy infestations, but the Indiana PFR site did have some pressure, and the treatments proved effective.

2021 RESULTS

TREATMENTS	APPLICATION TIMING	PERCENT MOISTURE	BU./A.	BU./A. DIFFERENCE	RETURN ON INVESTMENT
Control	–	15.4	184.0	–	–
1.5 lb. DiPel® DF	First Generation Corn Borer Hatch	15.4	185.7	+1.7	-$6.35
	Second Generation Corn Borer Hatch	15.4	189.2	+5.2	+$26.90
	First and Second Generation Corn Borer Hatch	15.5	192.3	+8.3	+$33.85

Corn $9.50/Bu. DiPel® DF $15.00/lb. These results are based on the disclosed study parameters and participating sites.

(pg. 267, 2021 Beck's Practical Farm Research)

(cont. pg. 5)

Organic Transition Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate different cropping systems when transitioning to organic production. For this study, Beck's is comparing the net returns of staying in a GMO system vs. using a non-GMO crop during the transition period. In year two of this study, the alfalfa transition system provided the greatest ROI.

2021 RESULTS

TREATMENTS	PLANTING DATE	PLANTED POPULATION	PERCENT MOISTURE	BU./A.	NET RETURN
Control: GMO Corn (XL® 6282AM™)	May 5	34,000 Seeds/A.	20.7	247.7	$809.39
Non-GMO Transition Corn Crop (XL® 6282™)	May 16	30,000 Seeds/A.	21.1	178.2	$304.25
Non-GMO Transition Alfalfa Crop (Leaf Guard II)	May 2, 2020	25 lb./A.	–	186 square bales/A. (4 cuttings total)	$893.70

GMO Corn $4.78/Bu. Non-GMO Corn $5.18/Bu. Alfalfa $6.50/square bale. GMO Corn Input/Application Costs $374.62/A. Non-GMO Corn Input/Application Costs $618.83/A. Alfalfa Input/Application Costs $315.30/A. These results are based on the disclosed study parameters and participating sites.

(pg.274, 2021 Beck's 2021 Practical Farm Research)

2021 RESULTS

TREATMENTS	PLANTING DATE	PLANTED POPULATION	PERCENT MOISTURE	YIELD	NET RETURN
Control: GMO Soybeans (3665XF)	May 6	130,000 Seeds/A.	13.3	68.7	$634.76
Non-GMO Transition Soybean Crop (360)	May 16	160,000 Seeds/A.	13.4	67.6	$759.97
Non-GMO Transition Alfalfa Crop (LeafGuard II)	May 2, 2020	25 lb./A.	–	186 Square Bales/A. (4 Cuttings Total)	$893.70

GMO Soybeans $11.95/Bu. Non-GMO Soybeans $13.70/Bu. Alfalfa $6.50/square bale. GMO Soybeans Input/Application Costs $186.21/A. Non-GMO Soybeans Input/Application Costs $166.15/A. Alfalfa Input/Application Costs $315.30/A. These results are based on the disclosed study parameters and participating sites.

(pg.278, 2021 Beck's 2021 Practical Farm Research)

(cont. pg. 6)

Organic Weed Suppression/Tillage Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate different weed suppression techniques and tillage practices and their effect on weed control, yield, and profitability. While weed pressure was light, there was heavy stand loss in some of the cover crop treatments. Voles were also an issue in the corn study.

2021 RESULTS

TREATMENT	COVER CROP TERMINATION TIMING	EMERGED POPULATION	POPULATION DIFFERENCE	BU./A.	BU./A. DIFFERENCE	COVER CROP COST/A.	TOTAL OPERATING COST/A.	RETURN ON INVESTMENT
Control: Conventional-Till	–	32,444	–	154.2	–	$0.00	$70.50	–
100 lb. Cereal Rye	Crimped After Planting	25,555	-6,889	82.3	-71.9	$30.00	$27.00	-$669.55
6 lb. Balansa Clover + 12 lb. Crimson Clover	Crimped After Planting	25,333	-7,111	76.3	-77.9	$32.22	$27.00	-$728.77
6 lb. Balansa Clover + 12 lb. Crimson Clover	Spring Strip Freshener Pass and Crimped After Planting	31,778	-666	117.7	-36.5	$32.22	$37.00	$345.47

Corn $9.50/Bu. Crimson Clover $1.37/lb. Cereal Rye $0.30/lb. Balansa Clover $2.63/lb. Moldboard Plow $18.50/A. Field Cultivation $13.00/A. Row Crop Cultivation $13.00/A. 3 Total Passes: No-Till Drill $17.00/A. Crimper $10.00/A. Strip Freshener $10.00/A. These results are based on the disclosed study parameters and participating sites.

(pg. 275, 2021 Beck's Practical Farm Research)

2021 RESULTS

ROW WIDTH (IN.)	TREATMENTS	COVER CROP TERMINATION TIMING	EMERGED POPULATION	POPULATION DIFFERENCE	BU./A.	BU./A. DIFFERENCE	COVER CROP COST/A.	TOTAL OPERATING COST/A.	RETURN ON INVESTMENT
30	Control: Conventional-Till	–	151,008	–	55.3	–	$0.00	$70.50	–
	100 lb. Cereal Rye	Crimped after Planting	95,832	-55,176	56.0	+0.7	$30.00	$27.00	+$36.25
	100 lb. Cereal Rye	Crimped at Planting	99,462	-51,546	55.8	+0.5	$30.00	$17.00	+$39.75
15	100 lb. Cereal Rye	Crimped at Planting	156,816	+5,808	58.0	+2.7	$30.00	$17.00	+$111.25

Soybeans $32.50/Bu. Cereal Rye $0.30/lb. Moldboard Plow $18.50/A. Field Cultivation $13.00/A. Row Crop Cultivation $13.00/A. (3 Passes Total) No-Till Drill $17.00/A. Crimper $10.00/A. (After Planting Only) These results are based on the disclosed study parameters and participating sites. These results are based on the disclosed study parameters and participating sites.

(pg. 279, 2021 Beck's Practical Farm Research)

(cont. pg. 7)

Organic Planting Date Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the optimum planting date window for organic soybeans by planting on multiple dates throughout the growing season. Waiting to plant may help with weed control by allowing early flushes of weeds to be terminated through tillage but delaying planting too long can be detrimental to yield.

2021 RESULTS

PLANTING DATE	PERCENT MOISTURE	BU./A.
April 22-23	10.5	64.5
May 12-15	11.1	66.9
June 6-10	13.9	56.4

These results are based on the disclosed study parameters and participating sites.

(pg. 268, 2021 Beck's Practical Farm Research)

Organic Fungicide & Insecticide Study – In-Furrow

The purpose of this study is to evaluate organic fungicide and insecticide products, in-furrow, and their effect on yield and profitability. The products tested include Majestene and Stargus, both from Marrone Bio. Majestene is a nematicide and Stargus is a biofungicide. Disease and insect pressure was light, which explains the minimal yield response to both products.

2021 RESULTS

IN-FURROW TREATMENTS	PERCENT MOISTURE	BU./A.	BU./A. DIFFERENCE	RETURN ON INVESTMENT
Control	9.8	79.2	--	--
2 qt. Stargus®	9.8	79.6	+0.4	-$20.50
1 gal. Majestene®	9.9	79.7	+0.5	-$39.70
1 gal. Majestene® + 2 qt. Stargus®	9.8	80.3	+1.1	-$53.70

Soybeans $32.50/Bu. Majestene® $55.95/gal. Stargus® $67.00/gal. These results are based on the disclosed study parameters and participating sites.

(pg. 269, 2021 Beck's Practical Farm Research)

For more information visit www.beckshybrids.com or contact your local Beck's Hybrids representative.

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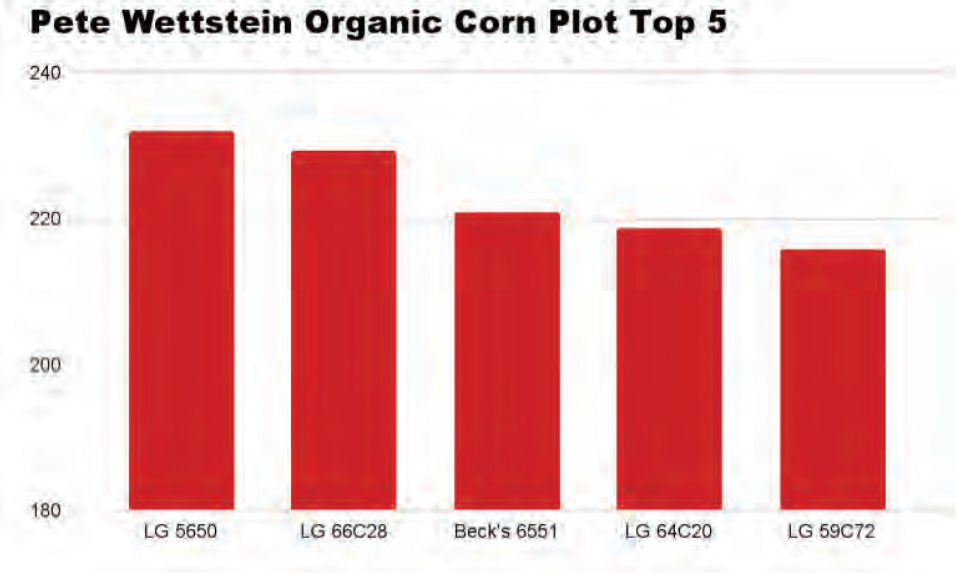
Earlybird Plot Results 2022

In today's corn and soybean seed market, hybrids seem to come and go about as fast as the weather. By the time a farmer gets to know the characteristics of a hybrid, a newer, more productive, and healthier one replaces it. Although it can be frustrating to have a constant turnover of genetics, this is simply evidence of the incredible improvements seed companies continue to make every year with their genetic lines.

Because of the rapidly changing lineup of hybrids, farmers today must rely even more on their Seed Salesman to make informed seed placement recommendations. Another way a farmer can evaluate new genetics is through hybrid plots in their area and on similar soil types. Last year, Earlybird participated in four plots: One organic corn plot, two conventional corn plots, and one conventional soybean plot. The results are summarized below.

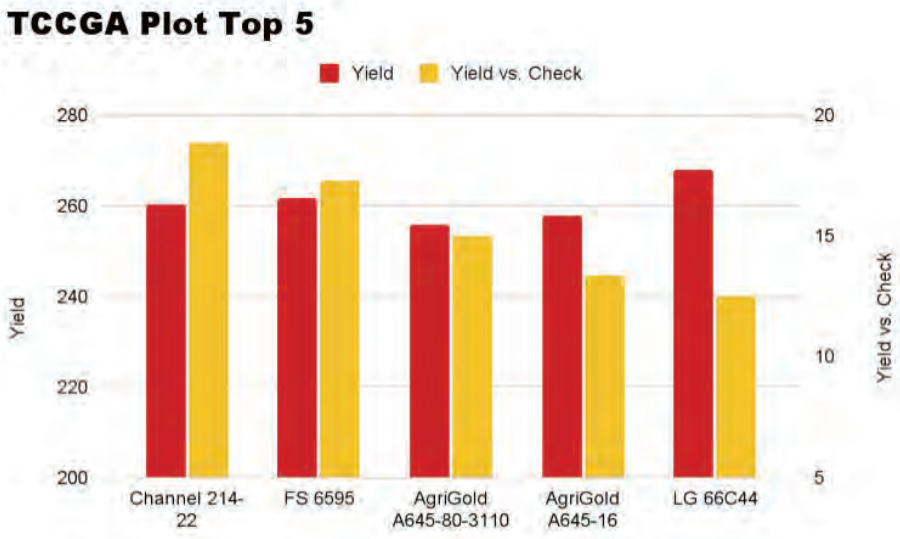
Organic Corn Plot:

A local organic grower, Pete Wettstein, coordinated an organic corn plot near El Paso. This plot included 19 hybrids from 5 different seed companies including LG Seeds, Prairie Hybrids, American Organics, Beck's, and Sun Prairie. The soil can be described as a well-drained clay loam, a productive soil type. As many of the local farmers experienced, disease and lodging set in as the crop matured and some of the hybrids took serious losses while others stood tall and managed the stress. We estimated the percent lodging for each hybrid, and they ranged from 100% lodged to just 5% lodged. Yields also varied widely across the plot from 176.6 bu/ac all the way up to 232.1 bu/ac. The top 5 highest yielding hybrids are shown below.



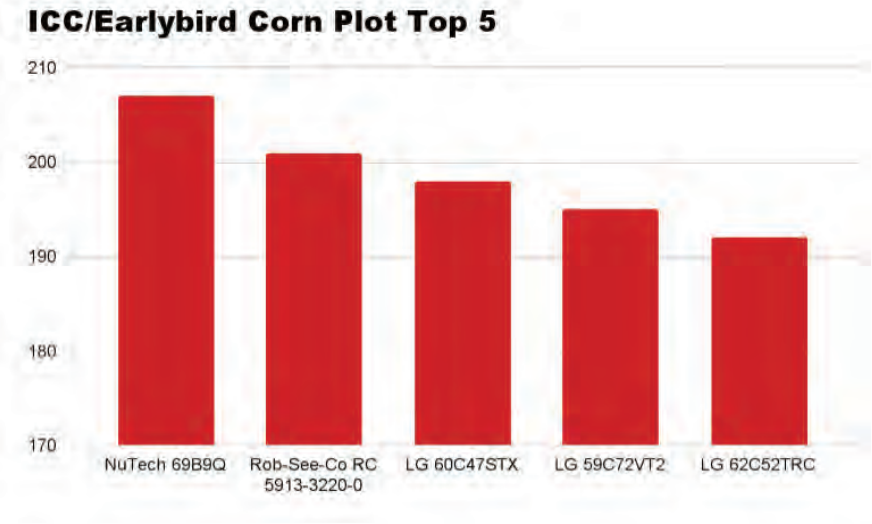
Tazewell County Corn Growers Association (TCCGA) Plot:

Every year, the TCCGA coordinates a plot and invites all the local seed companies to participate. Each brand can enter two hybrids of their choice. Resultantly, this is a massive plot, containing 35 hybrids from 17 different companies. Because of the large space this plot requires in a field, check strips are used to adjust the yields to account for variability in soil types. Each hybrid yield is compared to the check strips on either side of it, and a score is assigned based on bushels above or below the check. For example, LG 66C44 yielded 267.8 bushels. The checks on either side averaged to 255.25 bu/ac. Therefore, LG 66C44 is scored as 12.55 bushels above the check (267.8 - 255.25 = 12.55). This plot was located just West of Morton on a flat, black, productive soil type. *(cont. pg. 9)*



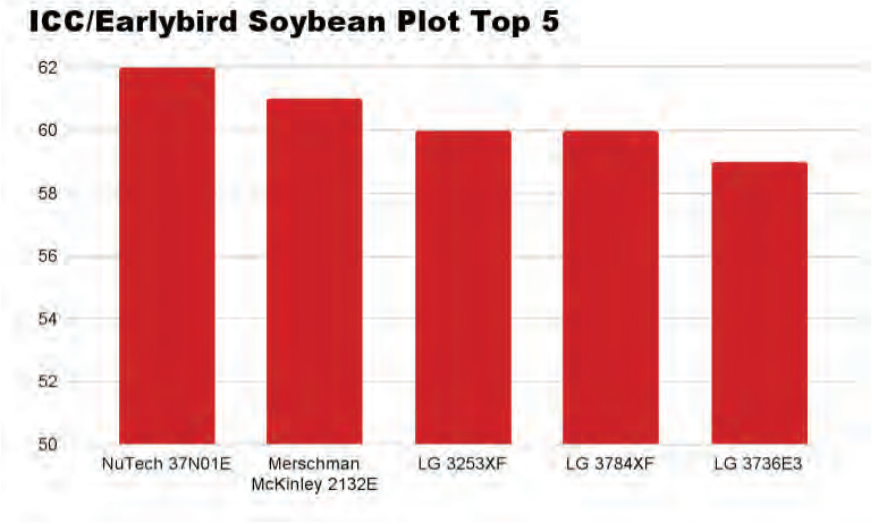
Illinois Central College/Earlybird Corn Plot:

Earlybird partnered with ICC last year to coordinate a plot to evaluate the brands sold by Earlybird which include LG and NuTech. Also included in the plot is competitor Rob-See-Co. This plot was located along Route 24, just East of the ICC entrance. The soil type in this field is tough: a timber-clay with poor drainage and organic matter. Therefore, these results should be used by growers with similar soil types. This plot was also planted just a few days before a wet, cold snap, so results may be indicative of a hybrid's ability to overcome early season stress.



Illinois Central College/Earlybird Soybean Plot:

Just to the West of the corn plot, Earlybird and ICC also planted a soybean plot with all of the brands that Earlybird carried: Merschman, LG, and NuTech. Also included is competitor Rob-See-Co. Again, the soil type here is a tough timber clay with little organic matter. These results should be used to select varieties for similar soil types.



Earlybird is committed to placing the right seed on the right acres in order to maximize production, profits, and satisfaction. We look forward to participating in 8 plots next year to better accomplish that goal. To learn more about these plots or see the full plot reports, please reach out to Andrew Cottrell at Earlybird Feed and Fertilizer in Goodfield.

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What's the Cost of Not Investing In Your Farm?

Making the decision to reinvest in your organic farm can be a difficult task. What should I invest in? What's a waste of money? Do I really need to invest? These are questions every farmer asks himself, and more often than not, these questions get kicked down the road year after year. After all, if you're not sure, the best thing to do is save your money. Can't lose money if you don't spend it, right? But how much yield is lost to the weeds you can't control? How many dollars are left on the table when my fertility is sucked up by giant ragweed? When we started asking ourselves these questions on our farm, we came to the conclusion that having as many tools in our toolbox as we possibly can is almost always worth the investment.

What Do Weeds Really Cost?

Weeds are every farmer's worst enemy. Getting a leg up on these yield robbers is key to a successful harvest. But how do you know exactly what you've been losing? What can I reasonably expect to gain if I were to spend $25,000 on a new tine weeder? These are hard questions that no one could possibly say for sure but let me give you an example: Our staff agronomist performed a study where one plot was hand weeded, and the other was not weeded at all. Both sets of plots were spread with a low rate of chicken manure pellets (CPM), and a high rate of chicken manure pellets (5-2-2 NPK). Here was his results:

Corn

Weeded low rate CPM: 142/BU
Non Weeded low rate CPM: 123/BU
Difference: 19/BU

Weeded high rate CPM: 152/BU
Non Weeded high rate CPM: 132/BU
Difference: 20/BU

Soybeans

Weeded low rate CPM: 31.5/BU
Non Weeded low rate CPM: 18.5/BU
Difference: 13/BU

Weeded high rate CPM: 34.2/BU
Non Weeded high rate CPM: 16.1/BU
Difference: 18.1/BU

This is obviously an extreme example, as farmers usually do some kind of weed control, but even if you added 3 bushels on your corn, and with corn at $10.00, that's $30 extra per acre. On a 200 acre farm that equates to an extra $6000 per year. You'll have that $25,000 tine weeder paid off in less than 5 years.

Also, notice (moreso for the soybeans than the corn) that higher fertility means a greater difference in yield. How much money are you losing by feeding the weeds instead of your crop? By knocking out the weeds you're also capturing more return on investment on your fertilizer.

Additionally, by knocking more weeds out year after year, you continue to decrease your weed seed bank. By killing one Cocklebur, you've eliminated 400-500 seeds it could've produced. Even if 10% of them are viable, that's still 40-50 new cocklebur in the years to come. So this investment compounds its value every year you use it. Is it worth the investment now?

What Should I Invest In?

Now that we've established weed control is important, what tools are going to get the job done? The right answer is (as with everything in farming) it depends! Organic farming is basically the wild west. Two neighbors can organically farm in two very different ways and still be considered successful. So this question ultimately does fall with the farmer himself. I would like to highlight two pieces of equipment that helped us on our farm and our experience with them (Your results may vary):

Tine Weeders

Our tine weeder was the first new piece of equipment we bought for our farm, and we quickly decided it was a great choice. It covers virtually the entire surface, which means it can help within the row weeds and can be used almost right up until cultivation (you have to wait right after emergence until roughly 4 inches while the crop is still tender). Rotary hoes are at their maximum usefulness when there's a thick crust. How often is that the case at the right time? Tine weeders are much more versatile and work in a lot more situations.

Downside: Tine weeders do not work well with trash. If you have trash longer than 4-6 inches (depending on the thickness) and a lot of it, this tine weeder WILL turn into a dump rake. Some are better than others in this regard, and the amount of trash and size of the trash are really key, but you need to manage your trash levels if you want to get the full effect of this implement.

A 30-foot tine weeder will run you roughly $23,000 to $28,000 depending on exactly which one you're getting. So for a 200-acre farm looking to purchase a $28,000 tine weeder on a five-year investment, with $35/BU soybeans, you'd actually just have to grow an additional 0.8 bushels per acre to get it paid off in 5 years. For the same loan with corn at $10.00, you'd have to add an additional 2.8 bushel per year.

Camera Guidance Hitch and Finger Weeders

Camera guidance hitches move your cultivator left to right on a slide hitch depending on where your row is. Depending on which company you go with, it can be as close as 1.5 inches to the row. This allows you to get closer to the row than is humanly possible in most situations. This means you can cultivate with more confidence, set your shovels tighter to the row, and cultivate at faster speeds (as field conditions allow). What this also does is allow you to install finger weeders on your cultivator, which are very effective tools at getting the hardest weeds to control: in the row weeds.

Downside: If your cultivator has a lot of "slop", meaning even when your shanks and shovels are tightened they still move around a lot, the camera guidance hitch can not adjust for that. So that would mean you'd have to keep your shovels farther from the row, and therefore you wouldn't be capturing all the camera guidance hitch has to offer. Finger weeders are really only possible with a front mount cultivator or with camera guidance. I have not seen them be effective just running on RTK. If you're off even a couple of inches, you're going to be taking out crop.

A camera guidance hitch can cost roughly $36,000 and finger weeders are roughly $950 per row or $11,400 for a 12 row, 30-inch cultivator. Or $47,400 all together. For a 200 acre farm, growing $35 per bushel beans on a 5-year loan means he would have to gain an additional 1.35/bushels per acre of beans. For corn, on the same loan at $10.00/BU, that would mean he would have to yield 4.74 bushels more corn per acre.

Equipment with high price tags can shock any farmer worried about cash flow and their bottom line. But when you look at it as an investment over several years like many other tools on your farm, it can make it a much easier pill to swallow. Buying new equipment is costly, but not spending that money now can cost you a lot in the long run.

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Life seems to enjoy placing us in positions where we never thought we would be. For me, only ten years ago I was teaching high school mathematics in a local community. Never did I dream that I would start a metal fabrication company producing organic Ag equipment. For many of you, organic farming may not have even been on your radar but a few years ago. Never did you dream that you'd be interested in the old cultivator that your grandfather used that has been rusting away in that old fence row.

Whether you have been farming organic for decades or are brand new to the organic world, we all know that weed control is one of the most daunting challenges facing the farmer. And having the right tools is a vital part of your success.

I didn't start making equipment because I had the perfect tool for mechanical weed control. I started because I didn't. I was blessed to have some great relationships with a few organic farmers. It was through those early discussions that I was first challenged. I was given a passion and a drive to begin developing an entire system of tools that farmers could utilize to address the unique circumstances on their individual farm. Sometimes that's introducing new ideas and concepts. Sometimes it's improving on ones already out there. Other times it's simply organizing options and making them available in a way that a farmer can utilize best.

If there is anything that rings true about organic farming, it's that we're all still learning! The more we learn, the more we find out how little we know! At the end of the day, the challenge of weed control can be intimidating, exhausting, frustrating, and yet exciting all at the same time. And while I still haven't made the perfect tool for mechanical weed control, it is surely my passion and hope to provide viable options, working together to address the challenges that we face in the field.

To be very honest, when we first staring making prototypes and testing ideas I felt intimidated and underqualified. I would guess, that some reading this article have thought the same thing before stepping into organic farming. There's a reason why I have loved becoming a small part of the organic Ag community; be encouraged to talk with others. Try out new ideas. Make and then minimize mistakes. And let's all learn together how we can be better.

Currently we offer two different base units...

Our Rotary Hoe Pro aims to improve the effectiveness of the standard rotary hoe. A rotary hoe is a popular tool that works well but oftentimes has a small window of effectiveness. By controlling depth with gauge wheels and running a gang of rotary hoe wheels at an angle right over top the crop, the farmer is able to open up that window to better control weeds.

The Swinging Spider cultivator is an improvement on a rolling cultivator that has been around for decades. Our design is about user friendly adjustability, making this proven design more efficient so that a farmer can utilize the tool to its potential for both pulling dirt away from the row as well as throwing dirt onto the row.

Additional options are available for each of these base units including tine weeders, double hoes, finger weeders, shields, and more...

If you would like more information on our current products, I would love to have a discussion with you and talk through some of the options we have in production and others that are in development.

Jonathan Hostetler – Owner
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Taking Advantage of the market

2022 is presenting a unique opportunity to secure coverage that can guarantee a profit. It is an ideal time for a producer to begin that transition to become an organic producer or simply transition more of their operation to an organic crop. The crop insurance projected prices are set, the February average of the December 2022 futures price for corn came in at $5.90/bushel ($11.72 organic) and the November 2022 futures price for soybeans came in at $14.33/bushel ($27.41 organic). The corn projected price is the highest since 2011 and the soybean price is the highest projected price ever! The question to ask is "what do I do with that"? The answer is simple.....take advantage of the highly subsidized crop insurance products and lock in that profit. Below are examples of the guaranteed revenue a producer can expect with these high prices.

Mclean County Organic Corn:
APH: 180 bushel
85% Revenue Protection: 153 guaranteed bushels
Projected Price: $11.72
Guaranteed Revenue per acre: $1793

Mclean County Organic Soybeans:
APH: 58
85% Revenue Protection: 49.3 guaranteed bushels
Projected Price: $27.41
Guaranteed Revenue per acre: $1351

Reminder, the federal crop insurance program allows for organic producers to insure a contracted price. If a producer receives a contract price higher than the projected price it can be applied to their crop insurance policy. This "contract price" option must be listed on the crop insurance application and allows a contract price anywhere between 1.2 and 1.5 times the projected price to be applied to a policy prior to July 15th of the current growing year.

**I've heard of $33/bushel SB acre contracts, which results in over $1627 of guaranteed revenue.*

If a producer is thinking of dipping a toe into the water of organic farming, now may be the time to do so. These high projected prices allow more dollars to be protected and ease the transition from a conventional crop. Even with County transitional T-yields (which are much lower than the conventional T-yields) an operation may cover the cost of production on the farm.

Mclean County Transitioning Corn:
Transitional T Yield: 139 bushel
85% Revenue Protection: 118 guaranteed bushel
Projected Price: $5.90
Guaranteed Revenue per acre: $697

Mclean County Transitioning Soybeans:
Transitional T Yield: 42 bushel
85% Revenue Protection: 35.7 guaranteed bushel
Projected Price: $14.33
Guaranteed Revenue per acre: $512

These are some unprecedented times we are living in with high commodity prices, volatile markets, and global implications. Take the risk off the table and lock in these high prices and high guaranteed revenues!
Partnering with the right Agent/Agency that has the experience and knowledge to ensure your policy is set up correctly and the proper coverage is elected is very important. At Agsurance LLC, we understand the importance of protecting your way of life and managing risk that occur on your specific operation. We look forward to helping any operation that has further questions and wish each operation a safe and successful 2022.

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