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Soil Sampling: A Look Inside Your Field

By Rob Johnson, Federated Agronomist

Where is the best place to spend that first dollar? Whether you're renting a field for the first time or have farmed a field for many years, there's a strong argument for spending it on soil sampling. A soil sample, done correctly, can reveal many things about your ground you can't determine any other way. Just determining your soil pH, or acidity, makes soil sampling worthwhile by itself. A basic soil sample will also give you the organic matter percentage and potassium and phosphorus levels.

Sampling your soil doesn't need to be an every year event. Dustin Sawyer, the soil lab supervisor at Rock River Laboratory, says sampling every four years is sufficient. He also adds that this is just a guideline. If you have trouble spots or are trying to micro-manage a certain area, testing annually until the problem is corrected might be appropriate.

SAMPLING STATS

How deep a soil sample should be taken is a common question. University studies agree that cores should be taken from a level equal to $\frac{3}{4}$ of your plow depth. On average, that translates to between six and eight inches. This depth is recommended because acidification takes place in the top two inches, and the immobile nutrients are usually found in the top eight inches.

Soil sampling is a relatively inexpensive way to find out where your field is from an agronomic point of view. For \$15 per sample, you don't have to guess what's going on below the ground—you can KNOW. When the sample comes back, your Federated Co-ops agronomist will look at the results with you and give you a recommendation on the next steps to take. ☺



The Constant Driver: Service and Safety Mark Three Decades On the Road

When he sits down and thinks about it (and he doesn't sit still much) Larry Lindquist can't believe he's been hauling fuel all over south-eastern Minnesota for 32 years. "How time flies," he says. All told, he's got 39 years at the cooperative under his belt since he started at the Cambridge station in 1962—fresh out of high school. "I worked in the service station, then managed the fertilizer plant for a time," Larry recalls. "In 1969, I went into dairy farming for awhile. Then in 1977, Bob Stensrud, who was the general manager at the time, asked me to come back and drive the fuel wagon. I've been here ever since."

Larry's got a laundry list of changes he's seen, from truck size (1,200 gallons to 4,500) and communication devices (radios to cell phones) to the competition coming out of the Twin Cities. But it's the things that haven't changed that set this hauler apart. "The job is about safety first," Larry states. "You're hauling a flammable product on roads that are becoming more heavily traveled. And, you have to be careful on the farm yards or wherever you're delivering, watching for children, pets, and equipment. Good service goes right along with safety."

JUST LIKE FAMILY

Larry has so much ground to cover that he works with a partner, Terry McLean. Their territory can take them from St. Francis to the Braham area over to North Branch. This has resulted in quite a web of relationships over the years. "I value our customers," Larry stresses. "I've lived in this area my whole life, so a lot of my customers have known me since I was a child. It gets to be a big family, really, because you get to watch each other's kids grow up and have their own families. Quite a few of my customers now are the children of the customers I started with years ago."

One of those long-time customers is Donald Pearson, who farms east of Grandy. "I guess what I watch more than anything is how dedicated that guy is," Donald stresses. "He'll do whatever it takes to get fuel to you. He'll be up at four in the morning filling construction equipment. You could see his pain when heating oil prices got as high as they did. In the end, you buy from the man more than anything else."

Larry agrees—it's the driver's responsibility to keep customers satisfied.

"More than making a delivery, it's the trust that develops between the customer and the driver that is really the key," he says.

SEASONAL SANDWICH

For refined fuel drivers, there's never a down season. Summer road construction season is sandwiched between spring and fall ag seasons. In the winter, it's home heating oil. "We route ourselves and try to figure out the most effective way to cover our deliveries," Larry says. "We're constantly walking the line between providing the service needed and staying efficient."

Construction season seems to generate the most stories. "One time I was fueling a D-8 Cat at a construction site in the rain," Larry continues. "The tracks were slippery, and I wound up on my back in the mud. The operator was up there just smiling."

All the hard work can add up to some pretty impressive numbers. The tallies for his best year were roughly 3,600 invoices and 1.4 million gallons of deliveries. Still, Larry wouldn't have it any other way. "The winters are tough, but I enjoy what I do," he says without hesitation. "I guess 32 years kind of speaks for itself. I appreciate the staff at the Princeton office who enter all the ticket information and the excellent equipment the co-op provides us. Most of all, I appreciate the support and loyalty I've had from my customers. I've made a lot of friends." 📧



Driver Larry Lindquist visits with customer Donald Pearson after a fuel delivery.

Area Crops Stack Up Favorably

By Tim Kavanaugh, General Manager

I recently covered a fairly large portion of Minnesota. Our trade area looks very good when compared to much of the state. The far southern portion of Minnesota is excellent but much of south central and west central Minnesota is still very dry, and crops reflect the lack of moisture. Far northwestern Minnesota is very wet and the late-planted crop has been very slow to develop. Most of east central Minnesota and some of Wisconsin is doing well despite moderate rainfall. We hope for a late fall frost and some timely rainfalls yet this summer.

Fertilizer prices have fallen significantly from their 2008 record prices. Our staff feels that nitrogen and phosphates are at levels that will attract buyers before spring, even if fall demand remains slow. Potash will probably still need to come down some to appeal to buyers. Federated Co-ops monitors industry prices for fertilizer closely, and any contracted fertilizer we purchase for next year will have to reflect farmer producer commitments. Based on past history, fertilizer price sentiment can change quickly. Discuss your future needs with our location personnel.

Our industry is always concerned about the availability of credit lines. While banks have tightened underwriting on loans, we have a variety of financing options for 2010. Loan rates are still relatively competitive. Please talk to your location sales rep about credit needs you may have in 2010. 📧



Plot Tours: More Than Hybrid Numbers

By Craig Peterson, Federated Agronomist



With only a few days to go until our Plot Days kick off on August 31, we're excited about the program we've put together for you. Our goal once again this year is to make our plot tours an educational opportunity and send our growers home with more than just a list of hybrid numbers.

Our plots are always a great way to evaluate how crops are performing under this year's growing conditions. With six plots pretty well scattered across the territory, you'll see how hybrids and varieties did on a variety of soil types under conditions ranging from wet to near drought.

Once again this year, we'll offer break-out sessions at every location. Here are the topics Federated Co-ops personnel will cover:

- How did this year's weather affect your favorite corn hybrid? We'll look at how genetic traits, soil types, and weather interact to determine outcomes in the field.
- When to adjust soybean plant populations. The presentation will focus on how plant type, row width, and soil type impact stands and, ultimately, economic returns.
- The final presentation will be an agronomic topic specific to the particular plot location.

2009 PLOT DAYS SCHEDULE

DATE	LOCATION	COOPERATORS
August 31	Osceola	Craig, Janet, and Neil Gustafson
September 1	Rush City	Dennis Le Mon
September 2	Albertville	Alvin, Jeff, and Gayle Bursch
September 3	Ogilvie	Robert and Todd Steffen
September 4	Isanti	Paul and Janet Bostrom
September 9	Princeton	Larry and Sharon Wilhelm

These plots aren't just a great resource for our producers, but also a fantastic opportunity for us at Federated to see how these crops perform from start to finish. We're also fortunate to have the learning opportunities available through the CROPLAN® Genetics Answer Plot in Santiago. Our three Answer Plot grower sessions this summer have been well attended, with more than 200 registering for the July session.

Some of the same factors we've looked at in the Answer Plot will also be covered at the Plot Days events, so we look forward to seeing you at one of our plot locations. ☺



They're Here—And They're Good

By Kevin Carlson, Certified Professional Agronomist



What's new this fall in corn and soybean genetics is a pretty big deal. With Monsanto's SmartStax™ technology gaining full EPA approval, growers will now be able to plant seed with traits stacked eight deep. We'll have the technology available in DeKalb Genuity™ seed corn for the 2010 growing season.

SmartStax seed allows growers to use either Ignite™ or glyphosate herbicide. It also provides total plant protection from corn borer, ear worm, and root-worm thanks to a combination of six on-board traits, including the Bt and Herculex® genes. It's a complete and powerful package.

One of the best features of SmartStax, in my opinion, is an indirect benefit of the stack technology. The EPA has also approved a reduced refuge requirement for these hybrids—moving from 20% to just 5%. That means 15% more acres can be planted with a high-performance hybrid.

WHAT ABOUT BEANS?

Soybeans won't be left out of the action. The new Roundup Ready 2 Yield® beans are in our plots, and will be available for sale this fall from Asgrow and CROPLAN® Genetics. They're positioned to deliver a 7%–11% yield increase over current Roundup Ready® varieties by setting an extra bean in each pod. Take a

look at these at our Plot Days.

While you're there, you can also check out the new LibertyLink® soybeans from CROPLAN Genetics we're testing this year. They were developed for use with Ignite™ herbicide.

I'm really looking forward to putting all of these new releases to work for our producers. I believe all of them are considerable improvements over the previous technology and they should be a real asset for farmers in 2010. ☺



PEOPLE WHO CARE. PRODUCTS YOU TRUST. VALUE FOR LIFE. PEOPLE WHO CARE. PRODUCTS

Battling the Resistance

By Rod Gustafson, Albertville Location Manager

Once pushovers for glyphosate herbicides, several weed species are starting to put up a fight, and that is changing the way producers design their weed control program. In our trade area, the main offenders are tall waterhemp, lambsquarters, and giant ragweed.

There are really two levels to the problem. Some weeds have become rate tolerant. That means they can still be controlled with glyphosate, but it requires a higher rate to get a good kill. Then there is herbicide resistance, or weeds that are affected slightly—or not at all—by a particular herbicide. Glyphosate-resistant biotypes of common waterhemp and common and giant ragweed have already been identified in Minnesota.

The fact that resistance has appeared is not surprising. Glyphosate's mode of action is restricted to one site on a growing weed. With Roundup Ready® corn and beans dominating the market and continuous glyphosate application, it's easy to see why resistance is a serious issue.

REGAINING THE ADVANTAGE

This spring, lambsquarters was by far our

biggest weed problem in both corn and soybeans. Early dry conditions followed by a shot of rain contributed to the problem, and a lot of growers had to spray twice just because of the lambsquarters.

Producers can take steps to minimize the effects of weed resistance and extend the effective life of chemistries like glyphosate. The key is utilizing multiple modes of action in your fields, whether by putting down a pre-emerge product or tankmixing another chemical with glyphosate to take out the resistant and tolerant weeds.

Here are some steps to consider as you fight resistant weeds:

- The best approach is to vary your chemistry. Use different modes of action and rotate them when possible, minimizing the development of resistant weeds.
- If possible, consider using a pre-emerge product, which in addition to providing another chemistry will also give you some residual control.
- Don't just vary your chemistry. Consider varying your seed choices as well. For example, follow Roundup Ready beans with LibertyLink® corn. You get the convenience of a post-emergence

application with both crops, but use a totally different chemistry.

Talk to your Federated agronomist about different programs you can go with in both corn and soybeans. It's worth taking another look to limit weed resistance. ☎

