As we finalize planting plans for the 2022 growing season, it’s important to keep our end goal in mind; maximizing productivity on every acre. What does it take to accomplish this? Your choice of the optimal hybrids or varieties is a strong start, but seed selection is only the beginning. Proper seed bed preparation, timely planting, stand establishment, and effective weed management are several of many critical factors in raising a productive corn or soybean crop.

Establishing a successful stand starts with seed bed preparation. In our area, a majority of operations practice full scale tillage, however there are occasionally some strip-tilled or no tilled fields as well. All tillage systems have the same end goal; providing a conducive environment for germination, through proper spacing, depth, and seed to soil contact. Size residue to where it moves easily through implements and can be easily moved by row cleaners. Residue in the seed trench is not always cut by disc openers and can be “hair pinned” in the seed trench. A hair pinned seed suffers reduced seed to soil contact and imbibes less moisture resulting in inconsistent stand establishment. Also, ensuring your tillage tool is operating level and at a consistent depth across the field will help your planter to perform consistently across your field and result in uniform final stands. If dry conditions persist, remember that too deep of tillage will cause a loss of much needed sub soil moisture, inhibiting early seedling growth.

Planting windows vary widely from year to year, but early planting is a key factor in producing high yielding crops. There has been debate recently as to planting soybeans early, during or even prior to corn. Keep in mind, according to University of Minnesota data, soybeans planted May 1st have 100% yield potential and only lose 3% by May 15th, whereas corn planted from April 25th to May 1st has 100% yield potential, and dropping to 95% by May 15th-20th. Assess your risk, which crop would be more forgiving in a later planting scenario and more susceptible to adverse conditions following planting? Soybeans tend to be planted at shallower depths and with proper moisture and temperatures can emerge in a few days. While corn can emerge quickly under proper conditions, it is usually planted deeper and the growing point is protected below ground until shortly after V5. Soybeans are much more susceptible to a late frost upon emergence as the cotyledons themselves are the growing point. Using this information combined with knowledge of conditions in your fields and extended weather forecasts, a decision as to which crop should be planted first or second can be made.

Herbicide availability has been a looming concern for 2022, with multiple POST products difficult to source. Building a weed management program with overlapping residual activity is a great way to combat this challenge. First, identify problem weeds on your farm to target. To “start clean and stay clean” use a pre-emergence herbicide on both corn and soybeans, with a goal of preventing a majority of weeds from emerging. Follow with a post emerge application to clean up any weeds that escaped control. Also, I would recommend using a tank mix with multiple modes of action to combat emerged weeds and a product with residual activity to prevent further weed emergence and avoid reliance on a post emergence application as the sole from of control. Also, try to avoid using the same mode of actions in the pre and post applications. A successful weed management program minimizes the amount of seeds returned to the soil and fewer weeds competing with the crop in future growing seasons.

Every growing season presents new challenges and learning opportunities. I wanted to run through some of the basics as reminders going into the 2022 growing season. We have one chance to get it right and hopefully implementing good management practices will help maximize your productivity this growing season.

Here is to a successful 2022!

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