

CropLinks

information on forages, corn and cereals

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New Croplinks Blog Coming - Make Sure You Get The Information

AgraPoint will be doing a new blog devoted to forages, corn, soybeans and cereals starting in late April. Short updates on seeding, harvesting and pest issues will be included as they are occurring. Updates to variety selection guides, field tours/meetings, etc. will also be posted. This will be excellent information to have in a timely manner to make management decisions. More information on the blog will be communicated when it is ready to launch, but we want to make sure you get the automatic updates to your email when new blogs are available. To receive the updates, please email Gail at g.walsh@agrapoint.ca as soon as possible to ensure you are on the list.

To kick off our first Croplinks issue for 2012, we would like to discuss: what's interesting in the new Cereal Guide; are there some sulphur needs in high use crops; our upcoming mid-March crop meetings; and, the need to send your email address to get our new crop management blog. We will still continue with this mailout version of Croplinks, and adding the blog will give us an immediate method of getting brief, issue-specific crop management information out.

What's New in the Cereal Guide?

For barley growers, you should consider growing a 2-row variety called "Leader". Traditionally Nova Scotia along with Quebec and Ontario growers have used 6-row varieties, which usually have a slightly higher yield potential. There has been a shift to the 2-row barleys recently where these are not as prone to fusarium head blight, and tend to have lower DON vomitoxin levels. Leader provides the highest grain yield, test weight and straw yield potential of all 2 or 6-row varieties on the Maritime Recommended List. If you're growing 2-row barley, keep in mind that head size is smaller, so you need more total heads which means a high seeding rate and adequate N fertilizer to provide ample tillering. My recommendation is to seed as early as possible at 150 lbs/ac (167 kg/ha) and provide 60-70 N.

Regarding winter feed wheat varieties; we now have the necessary 3-year test results and the high performance from Pioneer 25R39, to put it on the Recommended List. There was a little commercial Valley planting of 25R39 this fall, so it will be interesting to watch it more closely. The 25R39 gives you a third variety option to 25R56 and Emmet for winter feed wheat growers.

Do NS Crops Need More Sulphur?

Lately there's lots written in the farming press about sulphur needs of crops. Sulphur is a nutrient like calcium, magnesium, boron and zinc that's needed in lower amounts compared to N-P-K. The sulphur removal from various field crops (on a dry tonne basis) is; alfalfa (4lbs), grain corn (3lbs), winter wheat (3lbs) and soybeans (7lbs). If you consider sulphur removal based on the sort of yields we pull off, then high % alfalfa fields having seasonal yields of 4-5 D.M tonnes/acre would pull out 15-20 lbs/acre sulphur out of your soil. This level of sulphur removal by high % alfalfa mixtures is almost double the sulphur of a decent grain corn crop, and triple the sulphur removal of soybeans or winter wheat.

Do NS Crops Need More Sulphur? (continued)

Part of the reason we're seeing more written about sulphur nutrition, is that our soils are now only getting about 10 lbs/ac of sulphur annually from acid rain, versus about double that in the 70's and 80's when sulphur emissions were higher. Phosphate fertilizers fifty years ago also had 12%S versus only 1%S today. Manure is a good sulphur source, but there is a lot less manure spread in the cash-crop areas of southern Ontario and US Midwest.

Where are your soil test sulphur levels? Dig out the most recent soil test and look at the "detailed" pages which show all the nutrient analysis, half way down is sulphur (kg/ha). If your levels are less than 20-25 kg/ha, especially on a sandy soil (with low organic matter, low pH), then consider adding sulphur to fertilizer blends. If the soil test levels are in the 28-35 kg/ha range, this can likely be maintained with decent rates of manure or fertilizer S every 2-3 years, except perhaps if you're in the alfalfa part of the rotation. Above 40 kg/ha soil sulphur levels are ample, providing these levels are maintained.

In researching this article there's lots of discrepancies in the trials reporting whether you get a payback on adding sulphur. The various "fertilizer institutes" that tend to be heavily funded by the fertilizer manufacturers are saying there is an economic yield response on lower sulphur soils. The more independent university or government research isn't often seeing a yield boost from sulphur fertilizer. Multisite research on corn & soybean by Iowa State (2001) didn't show a significant yield, protein or leaf chlorophyll increase from fairly high sulphur rates, even though early season leaf yellowing and stripping was showing on zero sulphur plots. Significant research on alfalfa by both the University of Wisconsin and Minnesota had really inconsistent yield response from sulphur fertilizer additions.

Let your soil test levels determine if you need sulphur on a particular field. If soil test levels <25 kg/ha sulphur, then consider putting on some fertilizer or manure sulphur annually and re-soil test every 3 years to see if levels are up. Keep in mind that on sandy soils especially, the plant available-sulphate ion is very mobile (leachable) similar to nitrate, so applying smaller sulphur fertilizer amounts yearly are better. If your soil test sulphur is 28-40 kg/ha then applications of some manure, gypsum, or fertilizer sulphur every 2-3 years should be adequate. Here are some examples of sulphur sources with amounts of quickly available sulphur provided:

- 1) Dairy Manure @ 4000 gallons/acre or 20t/acre = 14lbs S (15 kg/ha) plus more S release in Year 2.
- 2) Broiler Manure @ 4 ton/acre = 7 lbs Sulphur (8 kg/ha)
- 3) Soybean or Winter Wheat starter fertilizer @ 200 lbs/ac of 6-20-30 + 5S = 10 lbs S (11 kg/ha)
- 4) Winter Wheat or Corn topdress fertilizer @ 200 lbs/ac of 31-0-0 + 6S = 12 lbs S (13 kg/ha)
- 5) Alfalfa 1st cut fertilizer @ 200 lbs/ac of 7-0-40 + 8S + 0.3B = 16 lbs S (18kg/ha)

Adding sulphur to a fertilizer mix is just a few dollars per acre. For those located close enough to an active gypsum quarry, gypsum is a slower release form of sulphur and calcium that can provide 100-150 lbs/ton of sulphur over a 2-3 year release period. Call Jack if you want to discuss any S strategies.

Sprayer Re-Certification Points Opportunity

AgraPoint is hosting some sprayer re-certification sessions which will provide you 2 points. These sessions will be done by Ken Lingley, a PEI Pesticide Application Specialist who has an interactive nozzle technology clinic. You will work at different spray booth stations to look at nozzle types, wear limits, pressure/drop-let size, proper filtration and using manufacturer's specification charts.

You must call in (1-877-710-5210) or email (g.walsh@agrapoint.ca) to register because each session is limited to the first 25 – 30 registrants. There is no charge!

March 12, 10 am – 12 noon;
Glengarry Best Western – Truro

March 13, 10 am – 12 noon; Port
Williams Village Hall (for Corn and
Soybean growers)

March 13, 1 pm – 3 pm, Port
Williams Village Hall (for Vegetable
and Berry Crop growers)

AgraPoints' Corn and Soybean Grower Meetings

We have planned an afternoon program for growers which features; presentation on producing high yield soybean crops, on-farm soybean extruder, feeding experiences with corn snaplage and earcorn, silage quality differences between corn hybrids and the winners of the 2011 AgraPoint Corn Yield Contest. **Join us at 1 pm on either March 12th at the Glengarry Best Western in Truro or March 13th at the Port Williams Village Hall.**