

Field Connections

Plant Corn or Switch?

Considering our weather events this spring, many areas are experiencing delayed planting. When facing this situation, it is always good to realize the economic points that go into the decision of when to switch from planting corn to soybeans. Obviously, if you have already applied your nitrogen fertilizer and corn herbicides you are likely to continue planting corn. If you are not locked into corn based on those input decisions, you can still look at the economics behind whether you make the switch from corn to soybeans based on planting date.

What are some rules of thumb with calendar date and corn planting?

Each university and growing region is a little different in how corn yield loss is interpreted with delayed planting or replanting. We advise you to modify your approach based on your state's recommendations.

In a previous *Field Connections* article [Corn Planting: What To Consider](#) outlines some differing views from universities of the tri-state area. Nonetheless, some good agronomic rules of thumb are one to two bushels of corn loss per day after May 15th (this date also varies by state). Below are the assumptions we have used in our table calculations:

1. No yield loss due to planting date if planted by May 15;
2. One bushel per acre/day loss between May 15-20;
3. One and a half bushels per acre/day loss between May 20-25;
4. Two bushels per acre/day loss after May 25;
5. Insect and disease pressure will increase as planting date is delayed, so be sure to choose corn products with in-plant protection and consider fungicide use on these acres.

Corn

| Planting Date | Estimated Bushels Lost | Yield Goal | Estimated Yield | Price/Bu | Gross \$/A | Gross \$/Acre Advantage Corn vs. Soybeans |
|---------------|------------------------|------------|-----------------|----------|------------|---|
| 10-May | 0 | 150 | 150 | \$4.00 | \$600.00 | \$150.00 |
| 15-May | 0 | 150 | 150 | \$4.00 | \$600.00 | \$150.00 |
| 20-May | 5 | 150 | 145 | \$4.00 | \$580.00 | \$130.00 |
| 25-May | 12.5 | 150 | 137.5 | \$4.00 | \$550.00 | \$100.00 |
| 31-May | 22.5 | 150 | 127.5 | \$4.00 | \$510.00 | \$60.00 |
| 5-Jun | 32.5 | 150 | 117.5 | \$4.00 | \$470.00 | \$20.00 |

Soybeans

| Planting Date | Estimated Bushels Lost | Yield Goal | Estimated Yield | Price/Bu | Gross \$/A |
|---------------|------------------------|------------|-----------------|----------|------------|
| 10-May | 0 | 45 | 45 | \$10.00 | \$450.00 |
| 15-May | 0 | 45 | 45 | \$10.00 | \$450.00 |
| 20-May | 0 | 45 | 45 | \$10.00 | \$450.00 |
| 25-May | 0 | 45 | 45 | \$10.00 | \$450.00 |
| 31-May | 0 | 45 | 45 | \$10.00 | \$450.00 |
| 5-Jun | 0 | 45 | 45 | \$10.00 | \$450.00 |

While each farming operation has different input costs and selling prices, by establishing some general starting points and yield assumptions we can arrive at some idea of what date the economics of planting soybeans outweigh planting corn. As was stated previously, this date varies based on location and risks associated with growing corn geographically.

What is the take home message?

Economics of corn production in 2009 are showing favor to continued corn planting. This is not an absolute. Just keep in mind the risk factors, utilize the best new corn protection technologies, and weigh the economics before making wholesale changes to your management approach this season. Most importantly we want you to make a good profit, so talk to your REA representative about all your options before you make major decisions regarding planting dates.

