



## 2020 Yearend Review

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The 2020 cropping season has come to an end and it was a successful year across the board for the main 3 cash crops. Overall yields and quality of the crops were above average and with solid market prices available, most farmers should be able to take one positive thing away from 2020.

Each of the 3 main crops comes with a unique opportunity to maximize yields and returns. This is a great time of year to review your cropping season while it's still fresh in your mind. It is time to figure out what worked and what didn't. What were some of the successes you had and what are some of the challenges you came across? Which new products or practises will you use going forwards and which ones will you drop? With each season we would like to set the bar a little higher in order for you to hit those long-term yield goals.

These are some of the takeaways that came out of this season:

### Corn

Our territory for the most part had an above average year with the corn crop. Corn, in general, was planted relatively early and for the most part, matured strong to the finish line. Even with the mid-September frost, we saw some great quality and very dry corn by the end of harvest. Proper hybrid placement and a solid fertility program really helped producers hit that top end yield.

**Hybrid response to soil type and field positioning:** Not every hybrid is meant for every soil type. Planting certain hybrids into cold clay soils early in the spring may lead to poor emergence. Loading the planter with whatever is in the shed and going to the field isn't always the best

option to hit that top end number. Planning your hybrid positioning with your seed dealer is a must.

**Nitrogen Rates:** 2020 was another year that proved to us proper nitrogen rates pay the bills. Another \$10 or \$20 of additional N produced a strong return on investment in bushels through the combine. With the proper background fertility and adequate sulphur rates, 200-240 lbs of actual N seemed to be the sweet spot.



Left: Purple corn is usually an indication of phosphorous deficiency      Right: Sandy loam soil type exhibiting sulphur deficiency.

## Soybeans

Soybeans seemed to hit a home run for the most part, both on the yield as well as the grain pricing at harvest.

Most farmers I've spoken with were very pleased with their overall yields, with some areas hitting an all-time high when the final bushels in the bin were counted.

**Soil Fertility pays:** Good fertility programs and well-built soil tests play a large part growing top end yielding soybeans. 70 bushel beans require an enormous amount of late season fertility and if mother nature cooperates with August rains and the soil provides enough fertility, the bean plant will crank out yield.



Soybean leaf showing potassium deficiency

**Residual Herbicides:** Weed control programs are becoming more and more complex, even in the RR Xtend or Enlist cropping systems. We are starting to see the need for residuals and a more complex herbicide program as these weed spectrums keep changing and becoming more challenging. Long story short, residual herbicides are a key part of the burndown and should be incorporated into most programs going forward.

**Addressing Micronutrients:** The yield response to micronutrient applications can be significant when soybeans are showing deficiency symptoms. In some areas, farmers saw a massive response to manganese in soybeans. A foliar fertilizer application for under \$10.00/acre can show a huge ROI if the right situation arises.



Soybean leaf with interveinal chlorosis from manganese deficiency

## Wheat

The wheat crop, year after year, proves to be the crop that responds the best to a high management system. This system is a combination of early planting, proper fertility programs (fall and spring) and a solid crop protection strategy. Wheat is one of the best crops to get a positive economic return on added crop inputs. Producers with the top end yields are checking off all the management boxes.

**Fertility programs:** Wheat is a nitrogen and sulphur loving crop. There is clearly a strong relationship between higher fertility rates and final yields. Farmers that pushed their fertility rates this past year saw increased bushels at the end of harvest.

In 2020, the spring fertility response was larger than most seasons. Which may have been from the cool start to spring. Cold soils generally will not have the same early season biological activity and in response, will not mineralize or release as much nitrogen and sulphur from the organic matter.



Wheat with bright yellow new growth from a extreme lack of sulphur

The correct amounts of Nitrogen and Sulphur applied in a split application showed a very solid yield response this past season. For many fields the target amounts of 150-165 lbs of N and 15-20 lbs of S hit the maximum economic return on investment.

**Crop protection:** The suppliers are working hard to come out with new innovative crop protection products as quickly as possible. 2020 saw the launch of a new fungicide product in winter wheat crop. Miravis was the first combination SDHI (group 7) and Triazole (group 3) fungicide registered for fusarium head blight timing. These newer fusarium products coming to market are just another part of the full systems approach to growing a high yielding wheat crop.



Right: Miravis Ace showing visually improved plant health vs a competitor product

The next few months are the time of year to get a jump start with planning your 2021 cropping season. The Lakeside team is keen to help you game plan and make sure that 2021 is even more successful than 2020 was.