



BY PETER RESCHKE

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ields

...y needs genetically modified wheat and the
...logy use agreements that will go along with
...nt now, average corn yields are advancing
...ate of four bushels per year while wheat is
...g one. In 10 years that means corn will be
...hels ahead while wheat will have gained a
...r of that. "If we don't go to biotech wheat
...uit growing it," he predicted.
...gill agronomist Pat Lynch agreed, saying
...ces in varieties are the result of large com-
...investing lots of money. That's unlikely as
...farmers are able to buy a new variety once,
...ant bin-run seed in subsequent years.

Soybean inoculant shows solid payback

You won't make a lot of money applying soybean inoculants on a field with a history of bean production. But then again, a recently completed Ontario study shows there's a good chance you'll triple your input investment.

The debate over whether to inoculate fields with an established soybean rotation has been ongoing for years, with some experts suggesting there's little benefit and others insisting that the modest \$3-4/acre investment is more than worth it.

OMAFRA soybean lead Horst Bohner believes a three-year, Ontario-wide study completed this fall should put the matter to rest. With some 38 location/years, Bohner believes the data set is fairly reliable.

When all the sites were tallied, the average yield benefit from inoculating fields with a history of bean production was 1.25 bushels. The cooler weather of 2010 provided a 1.8 bushel boost, Bohner says. It seems that in a year where some fields didn't nodulate until late in the growing season the additional rhizobia paid greater dividends than in a warm season.

Interestingly there wasn't a lot of variation. Seventy-five per cent of the plots saw a positive response and most of these fell into the one to two additional bushel range. "I think the results are pretty compelling," Bohner says.

He figures it's an easy way for growers to squeeze an extra bushel out of their crop without a lot of inconvenience. "It won't change the world but modern inoculants are very user-friendly, especially when the seed companies are willing to apply them for you," he says.

One of these new products is Becker Underwood's recently registered HiCoat N/T S225, a so-called biostacked pre-inoculant that comes on the seed and stays viable for up to 225 days when applied without a chemical seed treatment, according to the company. Having it applied at the seed source means more even coverage than what might be expected with on-farm application.

Bohner says he's especially pleased because the results of the three-year study fit very well with similar research done in Michigan and Ohio.

Cover crop research yields early results

A University of Guelph study to look at the benefits of interseeding an alfalfa cover crop into sweet and seed corn stands is turning out to be a lot more far-reaching.

The new project, being done in conjunction with the soil and crop improvement association, was initially intended to look at

Other early results of the study suggest the cover crops are of little benefit in controlling weeds and can produce more pest pressure, such as European corn borers being attracted to oats and rye. Smut problems in the corn seemed to be greater in the oil-seed radish/rye mix, Van Eerd said.

An economic analysis, done by economist Richard Vyn, looked at cover crop seed and planting costs as well as herbicides to control the rye. But Vyn found that in most cases the cover crop plots were as profitable, or more so, as plots grown without cover crops.



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