

Feature Story



Setting up for Success: 2017 Planning Tips

“Plan the work, work the plan.” This age-old adage rings true across any project in any industry. In farming, the plan outlines the important path from buying farm inputs to making harvest marketing decisions. When building a solid plan, a helpful first step is to evaluate successes — and challenges — from the past. Here are a few key learnings, broken down by state, from 2016 along with recommendations for 2017.

Kansas

Many Kansas growers caught a break from Mother Nature with timely rainfall supporting crop growth. Having the right amount of rain falling at key times enabled crops to get a solid start to the growing season. Come harvest, yields surpassed the five-year average for both soybeans and wheat, with 16 bushels per acre and 21 bushels per acre above the historic benchmark, respectively.

Coming in to challenge soybean growers were familiar resistant weeds, including Palmer amaranth, waterhemp and kochia. From the business end, low commodity prices put a strain on growers' bottom lines.

Taking into consideration these successes and challenges, Kansas growers will benefit from proactive weed control in 2017. Laying a solid foundation of pre-emergent residual herbicides helps knock back weeds before than can establish in fields. In the tight farm economy, selecting inputs with consistent returns while maintaining an attractive cost-per-bushel will help push profits and maintain profitability.

Missouri

Growers in Missouri enjoyed an efficient start to the season, with corn planting progress averaging about 27 percent ahead of schedule and soybean planting about ten percent ahead. Yields for 2016 ended about 23 bushels per acre higher in corn and 9.5 bushels per acre higher in soybeans compared to the previous year.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Missouri growers faced challenges similar to their western neighbors. Weed resistance continued to throw a wrench in weed control plans. Throughout the past decade, about half of weed resistance cases reported to the International Survey of Herbicide Resistant Weeds touted resistance to multiple sites of action. Additionally, low commodity prices strained profitability.

To help curb resistant weeds taking stand in fields this year, growers should layer herbicide residuals using a system approach, incorporating multiple, effective sites of action. ROI will continue to be critical in achieving above average profits.

Nebraska

The variability of weather aligned for the better in Nebraska during crop reproduction phases, helping give a welcome boost to corn and soybeans. This success helped fuel high-yielding crops, with about nine bushels per acres more corn and seven bushels per acre more soybeans, on average, at harvest.

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Mother Nature didn't bring only good fortune, however. Record summer heat beat down on crops, adding some plant stress. Compared to climate norms, Nebraska acres faced a June about 4.7°F warmer than average. After planting, excess rainfall cut some residual weed control short.

Growers are advised to follow through on investments in new technology in 2017. ROI may be just around the corner, even if returns were limited in 2016. This all helps growers in the pursuit of more bushels. Growers should plan to raise as much crop as possible to foster results by the end of the season when it matters most.

Illinois

Corn and soybean planting progressed faster than average in Illinois, helping give growers a head start to the season. Planters cruised throughout the early weeks of the season, about seven percent ahead of schedule in corn and one percent ahead in soybeans, on average. Mid-season success with fungicide applications helped drive strong results at harvest.

In contrast to successes in plant health and disease control, weed control proved challenging for many growers. Waterhemp and marestail caused the most trouble in soybeans, and in some cases, weed escapes ensued due to some programs losing steam in July and August.

To continue success and address challenges from last season, growers should emphasize a robust crop protection plan. Counting on foliar fungicides to deliver disease control and plant health benefits will help crops rally in-season toward increased yield potential at harvest. Building out weed control programs to include layered residuals across pre- and post-emergent herbicides will help curb weed spread and promote success.

Indiana

Corn growers in Indiana saw impressive crop growth. Reports from USDA placed corn reproductive progress five percent ahead of schedule compared to 2015 averages. Carried through to harvest, corn crops yielded about 18 bushels per acre more than the five-year average. Soybean growers didn't miss out, with an average seven additional bushels per acre of their own.

Leftover effects from 2015 flooding were felt by some growers as weeds took stand in these areas. Other weed woes included increased PPO (Protoporphyrinogen Oxidase) and glyphosate resistance in the already challenging waterhemp species.

Growers looking for better weed control in 2017 should start their programs early with a foundational pre-emergent residual herbicide. If weeds do emerge, enforce a zero weed tolerance plan. Preventing weed escapes of waterhemp and Palmer amaranth will help limit increases in weed seed banks.

Ohio

Soybean growers in Ohio saw success in their pre-emergent herbicide programs early in the season. Come harvest, corn and soybean growers pulled higher yields than the five-year average, with three and five more bushels per acre, respectively.

Corn protection proved challenging for some growers. Western bean cutworm and ear molds fueled yield-robbing insect and disease pressures, and inconsistent rainfall left some pre-emergent herbicides inactivated.

To address the corn pests that brought challenges last year, growers should leverage insecticide plus fungicide applications at the VT growth stage. Additionally, applying foliar fungicides will continue protection against disease and promote overall plant health.

Iowa

Many Iowa growers planted row crops in a timely manner in 2016, providing a jump start on the season. On average, corn planting was 7.5 days ahead of schedule and soybean planting was 7.4 days ahead of schedule. At the end of the season, yield averages were above the five-year average: about 34 bushels per acre in corn and 11 bushels per acre in soybeans.

Challenges with resistant weeds struck again in 2016, with waterhemp and Palmer amaranth causing trouble in many acres. Low commodity prices strained profitability, reaffirming the importance of high yields and a healthy cost-per-acre.

With weed pressures in the spotlight, a priority for 2017 should be foundational weed control early in the season. Applying a pre-emergent residual herbicide hits weeds before they can emerge, helping the season begin with clean fields. Once the growing season is underway, it's important to stick to the plan and follow through on commitments to achieve the maximum ROI at harvest.

South Dakota

With many growers planting corn in late April 2016, in-furrow fungicide applications provided protection for young corn plants during the cool, wet conditions of spring. Final yields for the state were about 26 bushels per acre above the five-year corn average and 10 bushels per acre above the soybean average.

Like Iowa, South Dakota growers faced low commodity prices and weed resistance. Waterhemp and marestalk delivered consistent weed pressure across soybean acres.

Promoting high yields through proactive crop protection will continue to be a priority for 2017. Initiating weed management plans early by leveraging residual herbicides can help fields start and stay clean of weeds like marestalk, waterhemp and kochia. Applying foliar fungicides can also help carry disease control and plant health benefits through the season.

Minnesota

Early on in 2016, Minnesota growers saw conducive weather conditions. Following favorable weather for planting, corn and soybean acres were on average planted 13.6 and 9.8 days ahead of schedule, respectively. Timely summer rain then promoted strong crop growth, helping to set up crops for success.

Weed and disease pressures brought challenges for many growers. Midseason diseases, like Septoria brown spot, rusts and eyespot highlighted the importance of carrying crop protection through harvest.

For 2017, growers should prioritize their cost-per-acre. Smart investments in new technology can help push yield potential, promoting higher profitability along the way.

The Bottom Line

There are many factors to consider when planning for a growing season. No matter the state, the concept is the same — learn from the past, consult with others and think in the future.

To download infographics to accompany these planning tips, visit <http://bit.ly/PlanningTips17>.