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Is it time to switch to an earlier maturity corn hybrid?

The short answer to that question is “NO.” We are not to that point yet. In general the recommended planting date for corn in North Dakota (ND) and Northwestern Minnesota (NM) is May 1st. April 25th as you move into central/west central MN.

It is not recommended to move to earlier maturity hybrids if you can get your corn planted before May 20th in ND and NW MN and May 25th in central MN. Staying with the hybrid maturity that you planned for earlier in the year will help maximize yield potential and return on investment.

Recent university studies indicate that yield losses and grain moisture increases at harvest are minimal if corn is planted by May 20-25th. Plantings delayed into the first week of June, however, resulted in yield losses between 1.1 and 3.0 bu/day.

(<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/cpr/plant-science/late-planting-small-grains-and-corn-in-2013>, North Dakota State University). The University of Minnesota also has several good articles on delayed planting and hybrid maturity considerations. These can be found here: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/agriculture/corn/planting/#delayed-planting>.

When the hybrid you had intended to plant is considered “full season” I would recommend moving approximately five days earlier in maturity between May 20th - June 1st. For example, for a grower located in Wahpeton, ND a 100 day relative maturity hybrid would be considered fuller season. If planting is delayed beyond May 20th, moving to a 95 day or earlier hybrid would be recommended. Likewise, a grower located in St. Cloud, MN intending to plant a full season 105 day hybrid may choose to move to a 100 day or earlier hybrid. Beyond June 1st it is recommended to drop another 5 days of maturity.

Many factors are at play when deciding to switch to earlier maturity corn hybrids due to delayed planting. Those factors can include:

- Planting equipment and how quickly the crop can be planted
- Tillage practices – no-till vs. conventional till
- Soil temperature and moisture
- Field drainage (tiled, well drained soils vs. wet, poorly drained soils)
- Residue cover
- Harvest equipment capacity
- Drying and storage capacity
- End use options – grain sold off-farm, grain fed on-farm, silage, high-moisture corn, etc.

In the end, we hope Mother Nature cooperates and brings warmer, drier conditions so we can get the corn crop planted and avoid these difficult decisions. Just as long as it doesn't get too dry...

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