AGRONOMY UPDATE

Should you be walking fields this late in the season?

A great deal of time has been invested up to this point of the season in assessing plant stands, replanting as needed, scouting for both early and mid-season pests and diseases, determining the success of herbicide applications and assessing the overall success during the key reproductive growth stages for each crop and field. Those activities were critical in getting to this point, and will continue to be key in wrapping up a successful season.

Key observations can still be made at this point of the season, primarily in accessing the status of each field relative to potential harvest timing.

Corn

For grain corn, three key assessments to be made at this point of the season are the overall status of the individual field, how the crop has developed to this point and any potential crop inputs needed prior to the upcoming harvest season. Some key considerations could be: How has the grain fill progressed? Was it potentially impacted by late season dryness following pollination? Is the crop progressing to physiological maturity or black layer? Are the ear shanks healthy and retaining the ears well, or have they become dry and brittle with weak attachments? Are the individual stalks standing well? Are there any particular areas of the field showing differences in standability? Are there differences in coloration?

The key to identifying stalk rots is the appearance of the plant. Diseased plants often exhibit a greenish-gray color, which is a sign that the plant is dying early. Healthy plants will still show a darker green coloration and overall healthier appearance. Grain on the ears of any diseased plants will also likely be farther along in its development. Splitting the stalk of one of the diseased plants can show the condition internally of the stalk and can help in determining the severity of the disease and its impact on harvest timing. Diseased plants can collapse at the lower nodes on the plant, impacting the harvestability of the individual fields.

Soybeans

Likewise, the scouting and determination for proper harvest timing of soybeans is also important to final crop yields. One of the critical factors is moisture content. For soybeans, 13% moisture is considered ideal, which allows for optimal harvest and storage. Soybean fields which dry down quickly past this optimal moisture content are at risk for shattering loss, both in the field and potentially at the combine.

With all of the investments that you have made in the crop this season, a bit more time spent walking your fields in the time period ahead of harvest can pay off with a more appropriate harvest schedule and less yield loss.