



Preparing for a successful corn & soybean harvest

With the end of summer comes the start of corn and soybean harvesting across the Midwest. Are you prepared for this year's harvest? Corteva Agriscience Market Development Specialist Jeff Moon has a few reminders to make sure you're ready to safely bring in your yield when the time comes.

Get harvest equipment ready to roll

Moon, whose territory covers Wisconsin and Minnesota, says some of the most important harvest prep happens in the shop: "Farmers are continually looking forward. So, prepping equipment in their own shop or working with their equipment dealer has likely been in motion for quite some time. But with anything, unexpected problems can pop up once harvest starts." Moon says most farmers are great at planning ahead, but that sometimes things slip through the cracks when it's really busy. So, he emphasized the importance of the machinery to check off your list whenever you have some downtime, "making sure everything from combines to trucks, tractors, grain carts and grain drying/handling equipment is ready to roll."

Watch for weeds

Moon says now is also a great time to scout for weed escapes. If you do find large populations of weeds, you may want to consider discussing control options with your retailer and/or other trusted advisors. A herbicide application at this stage might not completely clean up the field, but it can help desiccate the weeds so they're less likely to tangle in machinery and bog down the harvest process.

It's obviously much easier to scout soybeans before harvest, but Moon says using your time in the combine to watch for weeds in both corn and soybean fields is beneficial. He says regardless of when you do it, keep track of what you find. "Take note of what the weeds are and consider what may have led to that issue. Did the herbicide do its job? Is this an area where I have had an issue in previous years? Is there an obvious pattern? Was there an equipment issue like plugged nozzles or a boom section that wasn't operating properly?" Moon asks. "Regardless, take note of the issue to assist in planning for the next crop season."

Dry weather considerations

Moon says it's especially important to talk about drought/dry weather and the effect they can have on harvest. "We are experiencing some very dry conditions which can lead to problems at harvest. We don't want the grain to be too dry at harvest, as this will lead to test weight issues and harvest loss."

Drought stress can have a significant negative impact on grain fill. Dry conditions can also make plants more vulnerable to pests and disease. All of this can significantly reduce yield and hurt your bottom line. So, keeping an eye on the forecast and, again, scouting regularly is very important this time of year. "Planning is key. You should be prepared to pivot as necessary. These conditions may lead to prioritizing fields differently than past years. In some cases, for instance, it might make sense to harvest corn before soybeans due to grain moisture and potential harvest loss," Moon advises.

But, Moon says, yield is not the only concern during a dry harvest, "also, dry conditions can spark fires, which can be very dangerous and costly." Hot, dry weather is often accompanied by high winds. A small spark from a piece of machinery can result in a fire that spreads rapidly across a field. This can damage crops, machinery and property, and sometimes even injure farmers and other people nearby. Iowa State University Extension advises carrying a cell phone and two fire extinguishers (a 10-pound unit in the cab and a 20-pound unit at ground level on the combine) with you just in case a fire does break out while you're harvesting.

Moon says having a safe harvest is the most important outcome and preparing ahead of time is a great way to ensure the process is as safe as possible. Remember, he says, you don't have to do the preparation alone, "visit with your trusted advisors to understand what is going on in your area and how others are preparing for the harvest."