

Time to make tough decisions

THE next few weeks are “make it or break it” for corn and soybeans. Here is some helpful decision-making advice. Thanks to the Indiana Certified Crop Advisers group and its panelists for providing guidance.

I cut back on fertilizer. Now I'm scouting for nutrient-deficiency symptoms. How will I recognize them?

Freeland: A light yellowish-green color rather than a deep dark green can indi-

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cate nitrogen deficiency in young corn plants. As corn matures, lack of N can be detected as the lower, older leaves show yellowing from the tip inward toward the stalk.

Phosphorus-deficient corn plants are dark green, with reddish-purple leaf tips and margins.

Potassium deficiency is expressed

by yellowing and dying of leaf tips and margins on lower leaves. K deficiency in soybeans appears as irregular yellow borders on leaf edges, with symptoms first appearing on older leaves.

Dlugosz: I like to let the plant tell me if there is a problem by taking a paired soil and tissue analysis. Many fields show a range of symptoms from normal to severe. Take both a tissue and soil sample from the poor-growth area. The soil sample can help interpret the tissue



NEED GROCERIES: Lower corn leaves deficient in N fire from the tip inward.

analysis if a problem shows up. Also take accompanying tissue/soil samples from an adjacent good-growth area.

Murrell: The best source for deficiency pictures is the Purdue Corn & Soybean Field Guide available at www.agry.purdue.edu/dtc.

There are causes for nutrient deficiencies other than reduced applications. Soil compaction, for example, can cause soil nutrients to be limiting.

Fixing problems (now) is difficult. The most efficient way of preventing nutrient deficiencies is to sample the field and follow recommendations.

Hail hit the next county over on July 4 last year. If that happens here, how much yield loss should I expect?

Dlugosz: Hail is particularly devastating when it hits around tasseling. Charts estimating yield loss based on growth stage and defoliation levels indicate losses of 40% to 90%, depending on exact amount of defoliation.

The impact of hail on soybeans at this time of year is not as dramatic, but can range from 2% to 20%.

Murrell: Don't assume any hail damage is too minor for the hail adjuster to look at. Bruising of stems and stalks can cause lodging problems later. If you don't have hail insurance, by July 4, it's mostly “wait and see.” Grain sorghum and buckwheat don't have a good track record here. If you replant soybeans, follow double-crop rules. If replant beans follow corn, be careful of possible herbicide carryover.

Freeland: I referred to Purdue's Corn & Soybean Field Guide and checked charts on “Defoliation at Various Growth Stages to Determine Estimated Grain Yield Loss.” For corn at 19 to 21 leaves (pretassel), 50% defoliation, estimated yield loss is 27%. At tassel and 50% leaf loss, it's 31%.

For beans, 50% damage could result in 6% loss at growth stage R2, and 8% at R3. Replanting either corn or beans isn't much of an option, since it would be July 10 or later before ground conditions would be favorable for fieldwork.

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Panelists are members of Indiana Certified Crop Advisers.