

Crop Production

Software helps make sense of farm data

By JENNIFER VINCENT KIEL

GENERATING data on the farm doesn't seem to be the problem these days, but making sense of all those numbers and putting them to work to become more efficient and profitable is a bit more of a challenge.

Set out to find a way to make sense of the mass of data, Otsego corn and soybean farmer Harold Lindsey developed the CropPricer software program. Using Microsoft Excel, CropPricer helps guide the operator through the collection and analysis of all input and marketing information.

Lindsey says it is the only program that handles a full season. From preplanting to postharvest marketing, it's a way to crunch the numbers — especially as margins are pinched — to see how one change may produce a different outcome.

"In recent years, I've been able to collect more and more data about costs of inputs, land, machinery, taxes, wages and about everything else," says Lindsey. "But stacks of paper and numbers can be quite daunting. Plus, sometimes you just don't quite know where all those numbers belong. More data is not better if you aren't sure what to do with it."

The CropPricer software comes pre-

Key Points

- Software collects complete data to see how changes affect bottom line.
- Developed for his own use, creator commercialized tool as interest grew.
- A five-year subscription will cost \$300 and includes upgrades.

loaded with spreadsheets ready to go. Each category is clearly marked to track things like fuel, seed, equipment, wages, etc. The operator can identify old crop and new, as well as enter an expected market price or a hypothetical price. There are upward of 25 spreadsheets available.

Immediate results

It's easy to play "what if," Lindsey says, based on live, real-time data. "The user sees the results immediately. Because of its flexibility, should costs change or the marketing price between planting and harvest, a few minutes at the computer will provide the most up-to-date financial view of the operation. A complete array of reports is also available for bankers, landlords, etc.," he says.

Lindsey originally developed the product for his own use. "But when I showed it to neighbors, they were inter-



TOOL TIME: CropPricer helps collect and analyze input and marketing information.



FARM AID: Harold Lindsey of Otsego created CropPricer to make sense of all the data generated on a farm.

ested, as well. I commercialized it and added things to it. You can control inputs and it do comparisons — showing how inputs impact cost of production. And it's not just basic crop inputs, you can add the cost of finance, trucking, and put wages in ahead of time.

"For farmers, oftentimes we take what is left. But by putting in the numbers, there are trigger points to know when you are

meeting desired wages. Basically, if you are taking a deduction on your taxes for an item, it needs to be in the program."

CropPricer was designed in 2010, and Lindsey took it to farm shows. A new version of the software was released in September. "I got feedback from subscribers and improved it," he says. "But this product will never be done; I will be constantly adding pages and features."

The product is available for \$300 for five years, which includes upgrades. "It's about 17 cents a day," Lindsey says.

3-month demo

Each CropPricer subscription includes a full library of narrated tutorial videos that guides the user from program installation, through midseason changes, to the final marketing of the crop.

For those who want to take a test-drive, CropPricer also offers a free three-month demonstration of the software. For more information, contact Lindsey at hilindsey@croppricer.com or 800-624-2174, or visit croppricer.com.

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