



CERTIFIED
CROP ADVISER

Evaluating Your Crop Plan

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Evaluating Cropping Plan Performance

To determine the success of a crop production plan, requires a very important evaluation step. Crop production plans developed in partnership with your agronomist are the roadmaps to achieving a profit. The basic crop plan covers management strategies for rotation, nutrients, pests, harvesting and record keeping. A Certified Crop Adviser can assist in evaluating the performance of the crop production operation by reviewing scouting reports, application records, harvest records and equipment performance.

Field Scouting Reports

Field scouting reports will be the record of the crop stage density and condition, weed stage and density, insect thresholds, disease presence, soil conditions and overall field observations at specific periods prior to and during the growing season. These records are important to have on file to monitor pest levels and crop performance field by field. A good field scouting report should also include a map or diagram to identify variations in the field. This is the time to highlight specific pests of concern that have to be targeted in future cropping plans and determine the efficacy of control methods used throughout the year.

Application Records

Evaluation of product application information including rate, timing, applicator, weather and field conditions in conjunction

with field scouting reports is integral in determining the success of this activity. Product performance within label recommendations should be expected, record any reasons for less than adequate control. Crop protection products are only guaranteed to perform when following specific rates, tank mix partners, mixing instructions, surfactants, registered crops, crop stages, pests at specific stages and sizes, water volume, pressure nozzle selection and weather conditions. Maintaining this information for each field at application time will help to ensure that any product performance issues can be accounted for.

Harvest Records

Crop yield and quality information combined with cost information is the profitability equation, and determines the success of the venture. A field by field evaluation of crop yield and quality will help to optimize levels of inputs for each field, try to determine any reasons for less than or greater than expected results. Hybrid and variety comparisons can be checked with harvest records, side by side or strip trial information will be useful when deciding which seed will be grown again on the farm. Quality and quantity are both important to the bottom line of the operation but sometimes growing less of a higher quality can mean more profit than growing higher volume of lower quality crops. Profit per acre should be the standard of measure.

Equipment Performance

Profit is lost incrementally. Many of the incremental losses can be equipment related such as uneven seeding depth, fertilizer application inefficiency, seed handling systems, overlaps, fuel efficiency, and unnecessary tillage passes. Analyze each step of your operation to see if anything can be eliminated or modified to improve efficiency. Plan to check planter for even planting depth, calibrate fertilizer and seed delivery systems for accuracy. Take the time to determine if bulk seed systems may help get more acres planted per day. A GPS guidance system or auto-steer technology can help improve efficiency and reduce overlap, often these systems will pay for themselves very quickly. Equipment records should include the hours/tractor and the fuel usage as a means of checking operating costs potentially identifying cost savings opportunities. Use the evaluation session to develop an over-winter repair and maintenance program.

Working with a Certified Crop Adviser to evaluate the growing season and cropping plan performance is an important step that ties everything together at the end of the crop year, crop production plans are the roadmap to achieving a profitable goal, evaluating the plan determines the level of success achieved in implementing the plan.

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There are over 500 Certified Crop Advisers (CCA) in Ontario. Each CCA has demonstrated their knowledge about Ontario crop production by passing the required exams. In addition, they have the crop advisory experience, the education, the commitment to continuing education and have signed a comprehensive code of ethics, which places the grower's interests first.



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This industry driven program helps ensure that Ontario crop producers are well served by those providing their crop production advice. This article was written by one of those CCAs.