



CERTIFIED  
CROP ADVISER

# Yield Data + Performance vs. Price

By Doug Alderman, CCA-ON and Fred Sinclair, CCA-ON

## Agronomic Value = Performance

Farmers look to save on input costs wherever possible. But is anything sacrificed when making decisions based on price alone? Seed is a good example where many growers consider the cost per bag instead of looking at the profit potential from that seed at harvest. If a grower looks for the best agronomic value for his farm, which in turn gives the best profit potential, then the producer needs to consider *all* of the factors when deciding which variety to use, not just the price per bag. When looking at agronomic value, we can almost always demonstrate that there are other ways to lower input costs versus using cheaper hybrids which may also be lower yielding.

### *Let's look at an example:*

Company A has a hybrid package or bundle that works out to \$150.00/unit including all available discounts. Company B offers a similar package with a price of \$131.00/unit. A savings of \$19.00 per unit at first glance based on seed cost alone. Looks like pretty impressive savings on the surface. Now if a unit covers 2.7 acres, this works out to a savings of \$7.00 per acre. Company A has demonstrated that over three years of head to head in-field comparisons they have a yield advantage of 3.9 bu/acre with 1% drier corn at harvest. At *today's* prices, Company A actually has a *harvest advantage* of nearly \$14.00/acre – this is without looking at other advantages including standability, reduced harvest fuel use and time.

If prices rise on the commodity side and/or on the drying/energy side, or if hybrid A yields even higher than what the comparison data shows, this becomes even more of an advantage for the higher priced, higher yield potential hybrid. Using multi-year performance data when doing these calculations provides additional credibility, as the yield is proven over time and frequency.

## Use Multiple Sources of Data When Choosing Seed Varieties

In working with growers we find that each farm has different needs – ranging from the need for conventional hybrids to the need for single, double or triple stacks. Other characteristics such as standability and early season vigor are also important in the seed decision process. These types of traits can only be assessed in environments where the stress conditions occurred. Individual trials may or may not show particular stresses on an annual basis.

The analysis of a corn hybrid for example depends a great deal on the number of comparisons that have been conducted under different conditions. Why not just use the results from your own farm or nearby locations to predict how hybrids will react or perform? The answer is in the variability of the weather from year to year. There is simply no way to know what sort of weather conditions will occur at a particular location before the season starts or to predict exactly how a hybrid will perform in the upcoming year. Lacking any good way to know what will

happen in a particular field, the best way to choose varieties is to average results from a large number of trials, run over a large area, and include conditions that might reasonably be expected to occur in the field this year. The idea that only comparisons done on any specific farm are useful in choosing inputs is simply wrong. In order to get enough information to be reasonably predictive, we must use results from a variety of sources, with results averaged over multiple trial locations and years. If we consider enough comparisons, we can use results generated on various soil types and with farming practices reasonably close to those used in a particular field. The result is the selection of a hybrid that is most likely to prosper through whatever Mother Nature sends our way next season.

## 20-60-20 Rule

Also remember to position corn hybrids across a range of maturities. Every year is different and next year could be as cool and dry as this year was warm and wet. Use the 20-60-20 rule with corn hybrids – 20% earlier than the local maturity, 60% matched to the local maturity and 20% with later maturing hybrids. This mix will give you the best odds of producing a successful crop that will reach maturity under a range of conditions.

Use all of the factors and data available to you when making seed or other input decisions. It's not always about price; it's about performance and the difference this can make at harvest next fall - when the seed decision you make this fall really counts!

*Both Doug Alderman and Fred Sinclair are Certified Crop Advisers with Pride Seeds. Doug is Sales Manager for Eastern Canada and Fred is Manager of Product Development.*

*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.*



CERTIFIED  
CROP ADVISER

*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 CCA's.*