GOLDEN HORSESHOE

REGIONAL SOIL & CROP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Soil & Crop News - December 2007 *Publications Mail Agreement 40046443*

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Clayfield Farms

According to Mark Koabel, farming at the tip of the Niagara Peninsula provides both unique challenges and unique opportunities; (Clayfield Farms is only 10 miles from Fort Erie) and if anyone should know it would be Mark because he is a 5th generation Peninsula farmer. It was 1802 when two Koabel brothers first emigrated from Germany and came to Canada. One settled in Kitchener and the other in the Niagara Peninsula. Since that time Koabels have continued to farm in the Peninsula and are, in fact, one of the oldest families in Humberston Township.

Mark Koabel Is A 5th Generation Niagara Peninsula Farmer

Citing such things as the nearby race track at Fort Erie and the suitability of his land to growing feed for horses as being positive Mark says there are also negative aspects to his geographical location – one being that he typically has a shorter growing season than does much of the peninsula. Clayfield Farms is only about 2 miles north of the Lake Erie shoreline at the mouth of the Niagara river. Each spring Hydro One installs an ice boom to keep ice from floating down the river and damaging power generation equipment. The boom is kept in place until spring thaws have diminished the ice pack to something less than 50 square miles. Mark says prevailing winds blow over the ice as they come off the lake and it's a lot like having an ice box in your back yard. "It means that every spring we are at least 10 days to 2 weeks behind the Wainfleet area" he said.

Mark Koabel and his wife Lynn live at 2234 Wilhelm Rd., just north of Hwy. # 3. They bought this 43 acre farm, in 1980 – the year before they were married. Both Mark and Lynn remember well the run down condition of the old house on the property, built in 1881. Over the next 10 years they set about fixing it up – putting a basement under it and even cutting oak from their own bush to duplicate the trim. With renovations finally finished, they had it bricked in 1991. Mark says "With a city girl coming to a farm under conditions such as this you can only imagine the s### I went through."

On The Cover

(From the Left)
Mark, Lynn, Sarah & Donald Koabel of Clayfield Farms R.R. # 1 Ridgeway, ON

Easing Into Full Time Farming

For 20 years Mark Koabel held an off-farm job, first as a farm equipment mechanic and later as a millwright with the Ford Motor Company. In 1994 the Ford glass plant

Mark & Lynn Koabel

in Niagara Falls closed and he was offered a job in Windsor. It was decision time. As things turned out that was a major turning point for Mark. From that time on he became a full time farmer and hasn't looked back since. It was also the year he built his grain elevator. Coupled with the fact that the Shur Gain elevator in Stevensville had stopped taking corn, there were virtually no commercial elevators on his side of the canal. The closest would have been in Wainfleet and so the timing seemed right. As Mark does with most of his projects, he bought used and set it up himself.

Over the years the elevator has been used, not only to store crops grown at Clayfield farms, but also to provide

Mark Koabel's Father, Donald Koabel, Unloading Corn

All Corn Is Weighed On The Way Into The Elevator

short term wet corn storage for 4 or 5 neighbours. A separate bin is designated for corn going to Casco and all corn that goes in that bin is weighed as it arrives at the elevator. The neighbours pay for the service on a per tonne basis and Mark says they have a good working relationship. Often times, part of his payment comes in the form of assistance with difficult jobs; such as the time when they turned out to help him install a new distributor in one of his bins. On the day of this interview neighbouring farmer, Bill Young, was driving Mark's combine to give him a couple of free hours.

The Hay & Straw Business

"We have always been in the hay and straw business" says Mark. "With the Fort Erie race track only 10 miles away the opportunity is there". Mark goes on to say that selling hay as a cash crop fits well in his operation because it is well suited to his heavy clay soils. For a number of reasons he chooses a mix of Timothy, Clover and Trefoil and grows no alfalfa at all. "In the first place", he says, "my soil PH is too low for alfalfa to thrive, and secondly, hay without alfalfa is a lot easier hay to make." He says "What my customers want is hay that is clean and green." Mark used to ship some of his hay to Florida but these days finds that the 300 acres he devotes to hay can't even supply the local market. The remainder of his 1000 acres of crop land is rounded out with 100 acres of oats, 300 acres of soybeans, 100 acres of corn and 200 acres of wheat.

"Most Of My Customers Are Women Who Have Husbands With Good Jobs"

While part of the hay crop is still put up in small square bales Mark is gradually educating his customers to use large rounds. "Most of my customers", says Mark, "are women who have husbands with good jobs."

Getting Into The Feed Business

The feed business got its start in 1995 when some of Mark's hay customers asked about buying oats for their horses. The inquiry itself seemed simple enough but for Mark a new opportunity had just presented itself. It was obviously time to get back to growing oats. But, he didn't let it stop there. He put in a cleaner, a roller and a bagger, all used of course, and Clayfield Farms had launched itself into the feed business. While both rolled and whole oats are offered for sale, most sales are still made to horse owners who prefer whole oats. (only older horses require their oats rolled) Mark has even brought in tractor trailer loads of western oats for resale to his customers and for a time he cleaned and bagged oats for Shur Gain.

In 1997, only two years into his livestock feed venture, Agri Brands Purina came looking for a someone to sell their bagged feed. Once again the timing seemed right and Clayfield Farms took on a Purina dealership. Since that

Sarah, Mark & Lynn Koabel Standing At The Entrance Of Their New Store. (under construction)

time the business has grown and Mark says this part of the business really requires a full time person. So far, he and Lynn have been managing with some part time help. They go to the race track to take orders and deliveries are made 2 – 3 times a week. In fact the business has grown so fast that in 2002 Mark and Lynn separated it from their farming operation and manage it as a separate entity under the name C.F. Performance Nutrition.

Now, in 2007, Mark has decided that what he really needs is a proper retail store for his feed business. It is to be a 6,600 square foot country feed store and he plans to get into other retail farm items as well as offering a complete line of Purina bagged feed products. A new item that should sell well through his store is Pioneer seed corn.

Mark has just taken on a sub dealership for Pioneer dealer, Brian Heslop at Wellandport. The store is already well under construction and Mark says he hopes to have it closed in for winter. As you may have guessed, he is doing all the work himself. Despite the fact that both Mark and Lynn are enthusiastic about this new venture Lynn admits she has had a few reservations. "I am afraid", she says, "that we have just committed our retirement fund to this new store."

The Evolution Of A Seed Business

It just seemed to be the natural thing to do. If you have a cleaner to clean oats for feed, why not clean them for seed as well? When Mark looked around he discovered that there was no commercial seed cleaning facility between his place and Cayuga. He says there are a lot of small farmers that need only 3 or 4 tonnes cleaned and it's a service that he can easily provide. In addition to cleaning oats he also does soybeans and wheat, but so far has not ventured into the area of seed treatment. "Just to be completely safe", he says, "I don't want any seed treatment chemicals in the same facility as my horse feeds." He hasn't, however, ruled out the possibility of building a "stand-alone" seed cleaning operation but has no firm plans for it at the moment.

Diversification Is Important

Mark Koabel realizes he has a lot of things on the go, but says, "We all need some sidelines."

"We All Need Some Sidelines"

He feels that it is very important to keep his operation diversified and says he finds it easier to keep track of profit centres with several small individual enterprises. So far Mark & Lynda have been managing their operation with only part time help and assistance from Mark's father, Donald. Donald Koabel, now 75, lives on the home farm, one mile west on Wilhelm Rd. A part time farmer himself for most of his career, he spent 37 years working on the railroad. Mark's mother, Lorraine, passed away 10 years ago.

Sometimes Life Throws Some Nasty Curves

When we look in at the Koabel farm in the fall of 2007 everything appears to be perfect. Mark, just 50 years old, is in the prime of his farming carreer, still full of energy with lots of new ideas and obviously successful. He & Lynn have been married for 26 years and have a lovely daughter, Sarah, 16 years old.

But, things haven't always been this good. In 1985, just 4 years after they were married, Lynn Koabel was involved in a serious car accident. It was so bad that for a period of time she completely lost her memory and says she feels as though she lost about 15 years of her life. In fact her injuries were such that she had to learn to read and write all over again. Lynn is the daughter of Bud and Brenda Atkin who live in nearby Niagara Falls. During the recovery period her therapy treatments were very demanding and it was decided she should stay in the city. She moved back with her parents where she grew up and says, "I didn't get home to Clayfield Farm for two years and the day I came back I put on my wedding dress to celebrate the occasion".

Unfortunately for the Koabel family there were more problems still to come. In 2004 Lynn's identical twin sister was diagnosed with breast cancer. A few months later Lynn, herself, was diagnosed with breast cancer and has since under gone a double mastectomy. The good news is that Lynn is now free of cancer – the bad news is, her sister died as a result of the cancer in 2005.

The Koabel Farm House Built in 1891 & Bricked in 1991

Lynn and Mark are both active volunteers in their community and church. Mark, because of his background as a farm machinery mechanic, still enjoys doing some volunteer repair work for neighbours and friends. He is a past president of the Niagara South Soil & Crop Improvement Association and former director on the Golden Horseshoe Regional Soil & Crop Improvement Association. Lynn describes herself as a "survivor" and frequently does testimonies on life's experiences. She says " We have to have faith in God. It's what keeps us going."

Mark & Lynn Koabel Of Clayfield Farms were selected by the Niagara South Soil & Crop Improvement Association for this month's feature

Soil & Crop Annual Meetings In The Golden Horseshoe Region

Peel Soil & Crop Improvement Association

Date: January 08, 2008
Time: 7:00 (registration & purchase of memberships) 7:30 - Program begins.
Place: Brampton Fairgrounds.
Topics: Report on "Source Water Protection" & Update on "Risk Management" programs.

Niagara South, Niagara North & Haldimand Joint Annual Meeting

Date: Monday, January 14, 2008
Time: 9:30 AM
Place: Wellandport Community Hall, Wellandport
Guest Speaker: Dan Needles, humorist & author of the "Wingfield" plays.

Halton Soil & Crop Improvement Association

Date: Wednesday, January 16, 2008
Time: 9:30 AM
Place: Hillcrest United Church, Trafalgar Rd.

Wentworth Soil & Crop Improvement Association

Date: Wednesday, January 23, 2008
Time: 9:30 AM
Place: Marritt Hall, Ancaster

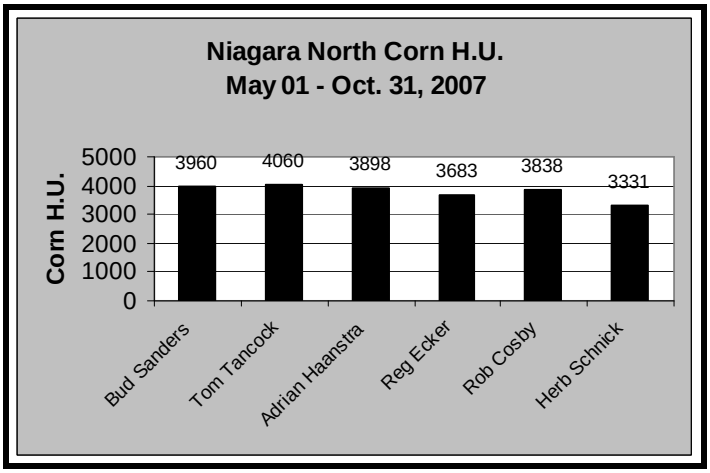
Brant Soil & Crop Improvement Association

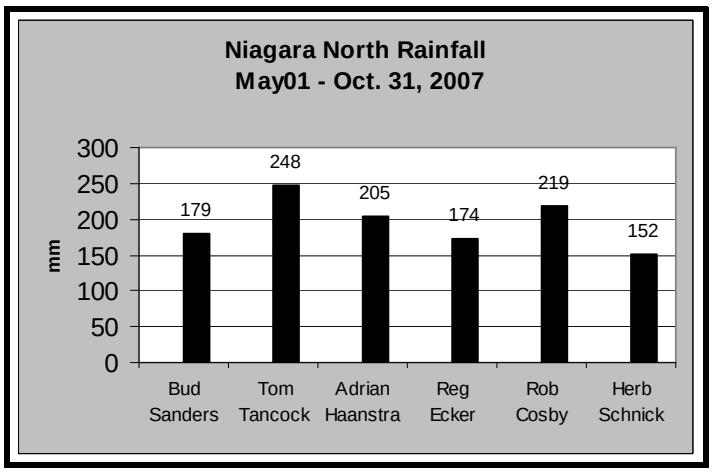
Date: Monday, January 28, 2008
Time: 9:30 AM
Place: Best Western Brant Park Inn & Conference Centre, 19 Holiday Dr., Brantford.

Norfolk Soil & Crop Improvement Association

Date: Wednesday, February 20, 2008
Time: 5:30PM - Dinner 6:00 PM
Place: Delhi German Home, Delh
Speaker: Jim Olmstead, of Hyland Seeds on his recent trip to the Ukraine

Data From Local Soil & Crop Organizations In The Golden Horseshoe Region





Soybean Aphid Control Plots-Lennie Aarts, Wainfleet				
Plot	Aphids/plant	Untreated	Treated	Yield adv.
#1	1910	34.5bu/ac	35.7bu/ac	1.2bu/ac
#2.	1011	31.5bu/ac	36.3bu/ac	4.8bu/ac
#3		48.1bu/ac	52.0bu/ac	4.0bu/ac
#4	500	37.8bu/ac	41.0bu/ac	3.2bu/ac

Lennie Aarts believes, based on the results of these 4 aphid control plots, that it is better to spray early than wait too long for the aphid population to build.

Norfolk Soil & Crop "Crops Forum"

Date: January 24, 2007
Time: 9:30 AM - 3:15PM
Place: Hungarian Hall, Delhi

9:30-10:15 Marketing Strategies From A Producer's Standpoint.
10:15-11:00 Health & Safety On The Farm
11:00-12:00 Soil Quality Workshop
12:00- 1:00 Lunch
1:00- 2:00 Alternative Energy Sources From The Farm
2:00- 3:00 Five Steps To Better Weed Control

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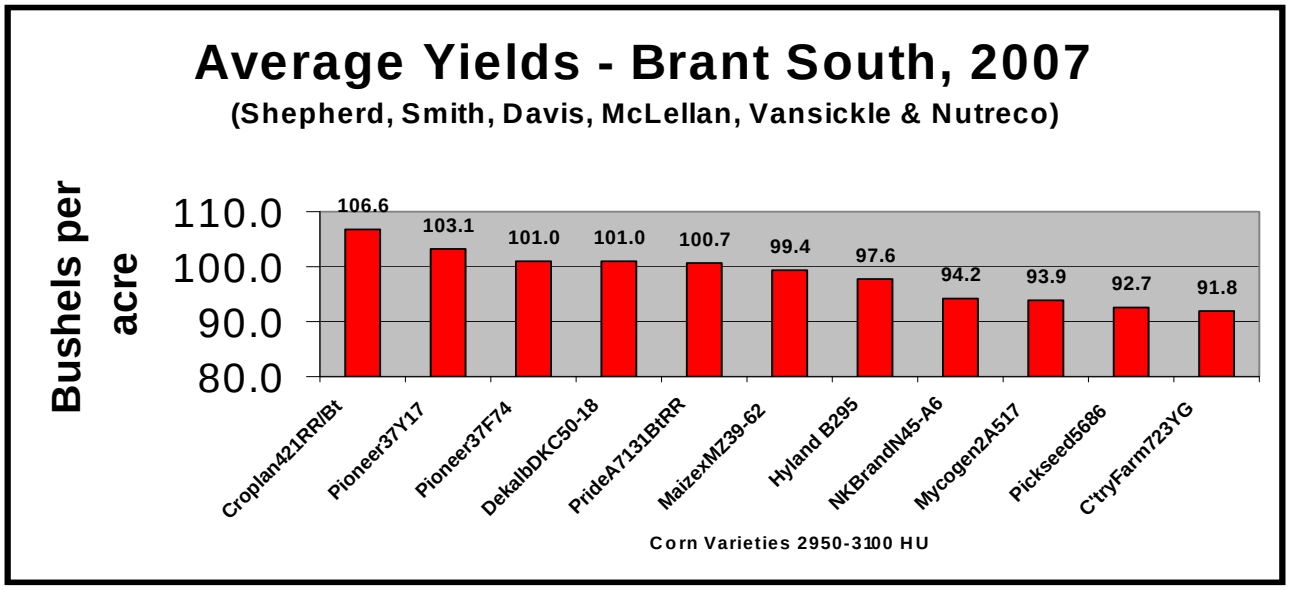
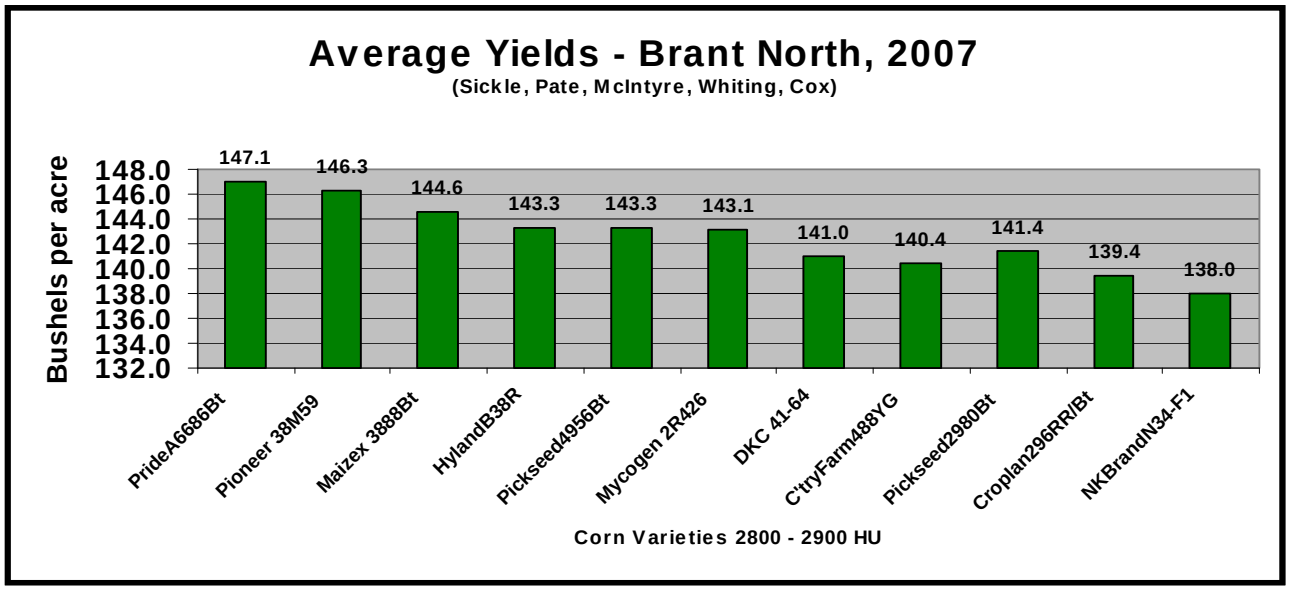
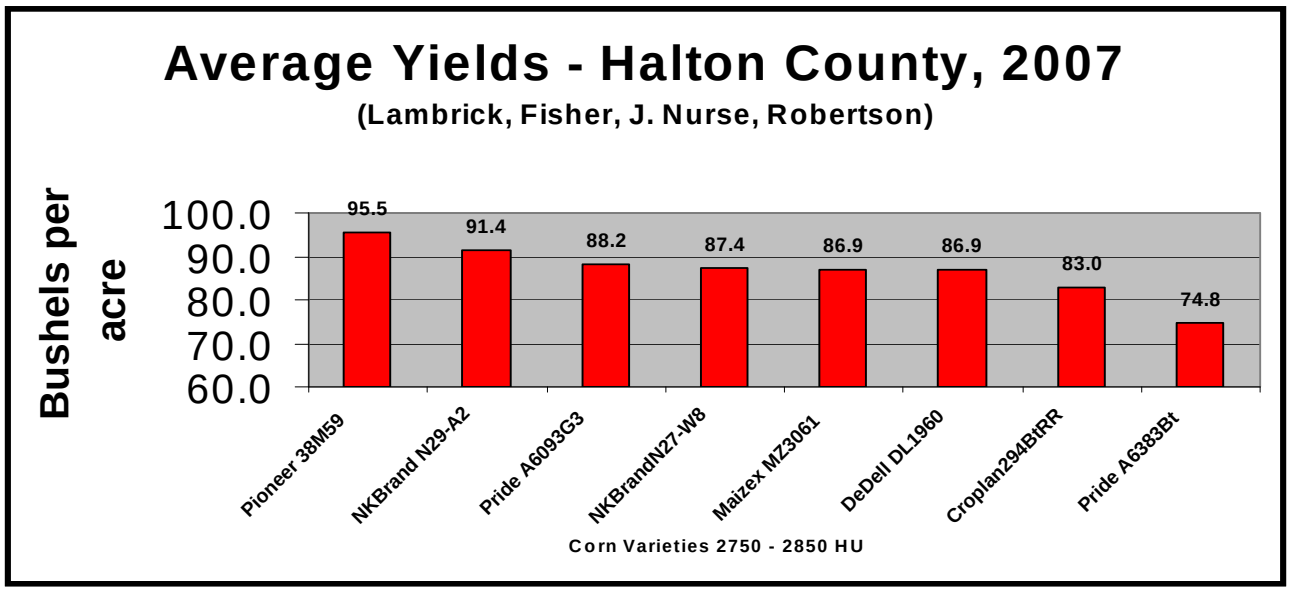

Average Yields - Brant South, 2007
(Shepherd, Smith, Davis, McLellan, Vansickle & Nutreco)
Bushels per acre
110.0
100.0
90.0
80.0
106.6
103.1
101.0
101.0
100.7
99.4
97.6
94.2
93.9
92.7
91.8
Croplan421RR/Bt
Pioneer37Y17
Pioneer37F74
DekalbDKC50-18
PrideA7131BtRR
MaizexMZ39-62
Hyland B295
NKBrandN45-A6
Mycogen2A517
Pickseed5686
C'tryFarm723YG
Corn Varieties 2950-3100 HU


Average Yields - Brant North, 2007
(Sickle, Pate, McIntyre, Whiting, Cox)
Bushels per acre
148.0
146.0
144.0
142.0
140.0
138.0
136.0
134.0
132.0
147.1
146.3
144.6
143.3
143.3
143.1
141.0
140.4
141.4
139.4
138.0
PrideA6686Bt
Pioneer 38M59
Maizex 3888Bt
HylandB38R
Pickseed4956Bt
Mycogen 2R426
DKC 41-64
C'tryFarm488YG
Pickseed2980Bt
Croplan296RR/Bt
NKBrandN34-F1
Corn Varieties 2800 - 2900 HU


Average Yields - Halton County, 2007
(Lambrick, Fisher, J. Nurse, Robertson)
Bushels per acre
100.0
90.0
80.0
70.0
60.0
95.5
91.4
88.2
87.4
86.9
86.9
83.0
74.8
Pioneer 38M59
NKBrand N29-A2
Pride A6093G3
NKBrandN27-W8
Maizex MZ3061
DeDell DL1960
Croplan294BtRR
Pride A6383Bt
Corn Varieties 2750 - 2850 HU

2007 Crop Year In Review

By
Kirk Patterson, CCA (Ont.)
Agronomy and Marketing Manager
Scotland Agromart Ltd.

Kirk Patterson

The 2007 growing season was not unlike any other year with a wide variety of challenges.

Once again one of the largest influences on all crops this year was the weather. However, unlike 2006 which was extremely wet, 2007 gave us some of the driest weather we have experienced in many years. If you were fortunate to receive any of the spotty rains it was often enough to make or break a yield.

PESTS

Soybean Cyst Nematode –several soybean fields in the southern portion of Norfolk were found to be infected with SCN. This pest has been around for some time with the symptoms often being blamed on other issues such as herbicides or fertility. If you suspect SCN you may want to consider varieties with tolerance for the upcoming year.

Soybean Aphids –the dry weather allowed soybean aphid populations to explode in many areas. Although predator populations did increase significantly they were often unable to compensate for the aphid population growth rate.

Thrips –another dry weather pest observed on many of the vine crops attacking the flower and immature fruit. Although the extent of physical damage to fruit quality was minimal the potential for the spread of diseases was high.

Corn Earworm –late season pressure in sweet corn was very high. This pest remained elusive even for growers on an extremely tight spray interval. Corn quality was reduced significantly in many cases with some corn left standing in the field.

CROPS

GINSENG –the impact of the late rains in the fall of 2006 were evident from the very start in 2007. Rhizoctonia pressure on older gardens was significant in some cases. The heat and prolonged dry weather reduced the development of seed in many cases. Although seed heads began to form normally, many heads did not pollinate and complete seed development. Despite this the overall seed harvest was much better than 2006. The dry weather forced many growers to irrigate far more than usual. Those using overhead irrigation experienced a more uneven appearance in the crop compared to those irrigating below the shade. Challenges continue in how to best apply fungicides for this crop as we move to more trickle irrigation. Products that require water to move into the soil profile often will not see any benefit if the only source of moisture is applied below the straw level. Seed quality for new plantings remained lower than average and many growers have increased their seeding rates to compensate. Overall yields and quality appear to be average which was to be expected given the extremes in growing conditions over the last two years.

TOBACCO –The crop experienced a late flush of nitrogen which made the crop immature. However, where the crop did not get hurt by frost the top pullings were very good. As with many other crops, the drought hurt the crop where irrigation was unable to meet crop water demands. In the greenhouse several operations were infected with varying levels of black root rot infections which resulted in poor plant vigor early in the season. Overall yield and quality ended slightly above average.

SOYBEANS –the weather did not help the soybean crop as we experienced yields ranging from lows in the single digits to highs in the low to mid fifties. Those who sprayed for soybean aphids are reported to have seen a yield advantage in the 7 bu/ac range. The 2007 season definitely saw plants stressed for multiple reasons with low moisture, nematodes, nutrient stress (potassium) and aphids.

GRAIN CORN –what a difference a year makes. For those who were becoming accustomed to record yields saw a return to yields well below normal. Yields ranged from the mid 30's to the 190's depending on how much rain you received. As expected many of the herbicides applied that required moisture did not perform as well as desired. Those who tried applying fungicides to the crop did see yield advantages as high as 22 bu/ac. It appears that those yield gains were not as much a result of decreased disease pressure but instead were a result from an overall boost in plant health and vigor, essentially like a vitamin supplement.

CEREALS –several wheat fields in the area showed signs of corn row syndrome whereby the field displayed very dramatic uneven growth resulting from residual

fertility. All fields observed followed a corn-soy-wheat rotation with both the soys and wheat being No-tilled and the corn using a dry granular starter fertilizer in 2005. Yields were considerably variable within fields and between farms depending on moisture levels. Improved prices and suitable weather conditions have resulted in a significant increase in the number of wheat acres planted this fall.

HORTICULTURAL CROPS –the hot, dry weather helped to keep most disease pressure very low. Vine crops did experience problems with fusarium and verticillium wilt where rotational restrictions prevail. Similarly clubroot pressure in the cole crops increased in many cases especially in fields that were planted to cole crops during the wet periods of 2006. In many crops the heat increased overall yields and the speed of maturity so that harvest became very difficult to manage. The 2007 growing season magnified water issues and the need to manage this resource to meet crop demand with a limited amount of available resources.

The dry conditions created herbicide challenges for post emergent herbicides as well. Lambsquarters escapes were observed in fields sprayed with paraquat or glyphosate. These weeds were also stressed to the point that herbicide uptake was negatively affected.

The 2007 crop year provided a reality check for yields on many crops but provided new opportunities for several others. The 2008 crop will likely to see the impact of the extremely dry conditions with a reduced water table especially if we see another dry year.

By
John Hussack, ADA, CCA - ON
Agrononomist, Clark Agri Service Inc.

John Hussack

In the Niagara Peninsula 2007 will be remembered for the excellent spring planting and fall harvesting conditions and all of the challenges producers faced during the growing season. Planting started with hard red spring wheat frost seeded in late March. Due to dry soil conditions it soon turned into conventional tillage and planting of all cereal grains. With the wet fall of 2006 small acreages of winter wheat were planted encouraging many more acres of hard red spring wheat being planted.

The winter wheat crop survival was limited due to the wet cool soils into which it was planted. There were several fields written off in the spring and many of the remaining fields had lower yields then normal. With the dry weather, cereal diseases did not become an issue. Winter and spring wheat fields yielded in the range of twenty to fifty bushels per acre.

Corn was definitely King in the Niagara area. It is difficult to remember when we had such excellent planting conditions and when we have seen so many acres of corn planted. Producers were happy to see corn back into the rotation in large acreage. With the large corn crop it was expected the soybean acreage would fall dramatically but indeed this was not the case. It showed how little acreage of winter wheat was in the ground. Most of the corn and soybean crops were planted by the May 24 weekend giving every crop an excellent opportunity to produce a bumper yield. By late May it was starting to be evident that if the crop had not been planted into moisture it was not going to emerge. There were several discussions as to whether or not the crop, specifically soybeans, should be replanted. It was very evident the reason for poor emergence was only due to lack of sufficient moisture. With little to no rain in the forecast it was decided that replanting soybeans would be the wrong decision. Rainfall for the month of June totaled less then 20 millimeters with most rain coming in less then 5 mm amounts. By mid July there was optimism in the moisture department with one rain totaling 30 mm. The severe drought continued during the remaining days of July and August.

Hot dry weather also brought along the challenge of pests to hinder the crop yield. Certainly pre-emerge herbicides on both corn and soybeans could not function to suppress weeds without the necessary moisture and a lot of fields required some post emergence herbicide applications. Insects affecting both corn and soybeans became another troubling pest requiring insecticide applications. Several corn fields by mid growing season were affected with Corn Rootworm Adult Beetles feeding on the leaves in very high numbers. Soybean Aphids in late July and into August affected the crop and insecticidal spraying occurred in earnest. Late August into early September, the soybean fields required spraying for Spider Mites. Along with the lack of rainfall, poor plant emergence due to dry weather at planting and two attacks by insects the soybean yield was reduced to a low of 10 bushels per acre to a high of 40 bushels per acre if you were along Lake Erie and received a lot more moisture. Corn did exceptionally well in most areas. The yields ranged from 60 to 150 bushels per acre and more.

In general most producers have had a challenging year with lower yields in most crops. The winter wheat planted fall of 2007 looks excellent and the high price is attractive. The heavy clay soil did not get damaged by the dry and early harvest. Soil conditions are great for a good crop in 2008.

By
Neil Milson, CCA, ON
Woodrill Ltd.- Guelph/Marsville

Neil Milson

Spring started early in Halton and Peel counties with planting in April and continuing almost non-stop until all the crops were in. There was adequate moisture early enough to activate the soil applied herbicides and for anyone that was fortunate enough to get wheat planted last fall it was enough rain to secure a good yield.

That was the end of the rain. There were soybeans in south Halton that had emergence issues and had to be replanted and like the soybeans and corn planted in late May or early June they received no rain until August 20. Soybeans averaged 15 bushels per acre and corn 60 to 70 bushels. North Halton had a couple of light showers but corn yields ran only around 70 bushels and soybeans 20 bushels. In Peel, soybean yields averaged approximately 20 bushels on the lighter soils and soys on some clay soils yielded substantially less. Corn faired better with average or a little below average yields.

Soybean aphids were a factor in most areas. It seemed that the further north we went the worse they were. A high percentage of scouted acres were sprayed and growers are telling us that the spray was most effective on the fields that they sprayed early.

It has been a good fall for planting winter wheat. The wheat acres are up substantially and the crop is looking good going into winter. Some wheat fields on the lighter soils in the northern Peel Region have been thinned out by European chafer damage. It is a concern that feeding will continue in the spring and cause more damage to these fields.

By
Lynne Cohoe
Homeland Grain, Burgessville, Ontario

Grain Marketing - High prices don't make it any easier!!!

The old adage "Be careful what you wish for " comes to mind as I think back over the past 12 to 18 months and the price rally that's produced corn prices of $4.50 and bean prices of $11.00. How have you done? Probably some moments of great satisfaction and maybe some less comfortable reactions as prices plummeted before you sold or shot up after you sold. This is definitely a market with a changed personality from the one we knew so well. No matter what the market conditions are, in my opinion the basics of marketing remain the same-

Lynne Cohoe

- the fundamentals – Supply/Demand
- the technicals – Indicators, chart patterns, volume, open interest
- the psychology of the trader –

Where are we now fundamentally?

In Ontario we have just completed harvesting a crop that ranged from record low bushels per acre (whether corn or soys) to record high bushels per acre depending on the rain fall patterns in your area. We planted more corn that ever before. Stats Canada and OMAFRA say we will have a larger crop than last year's record. I didn't agree with them earlier but after seeing excellent yields with minimal rainfall, they may be right. On the demand side we are not at an import basis and we will not need US corn as we did last year to replace vomitoxin infected local corn. A negative on the demand side is the turmoil in Ontario's hog industry as it struggles with the C$ rally and resulting implosion of hog prices. In the main, industrial demand for corn is strong and we are a long way from an import basis so local corn will be used exclusively. Remember there will be 2 more ethanol plants ready to buy your corn next fall.

Grain Marketing. High Prices don't make it any easier.

The US harvested a huge crop – over 13 billion bushels–amazing without too much on the ground. Interestingly, basis began strengthening half way through harvest except for some local areas where harvesting outpaced the storage capacity. If you follow the weekly exports sales of corn you will be aware that they are humungous. Well over 50 million bushels in most weeks.

I remember when a 50 million bushel week was an event. The glow is off the ethanol story but steady demand remains. Most plants will run and significant amounts of corn will be ground. Growth in usage will be lower than originally forecast.

Ethanol may have started this rally. It is significant income growth in less well-developed parts of the world that is the continuing impetus. Countries like China, India and others in south east Asia particularly have huge populations in process of being industrialized. With industrialization comes both good and bad. Higher incomes are on the plus side and result in an exponential rise in the demand for food, particularly better protein - more meat and poultry. Feed grains like corn, plus soybean meal are necessary to produce more meat and poultry. Government administrations are often non-democratic and aware of the precarious nature of their positions of power. Keeping the populace well fed is one element of a regime's strategy to maintain power. Cooking oils (soy, palm,etc) are other high demand products. Biofuels and the increasing demand for energy from these emerging economies completes the picture that has converted dull, agricultural commodities into the darlings of the index funds and propelled grain prices into the stratosphere.

Demand will continue. Prices will be volatile. Economic data and political actions that appear to have no connection will send grain prices spirally downwards some days and in the other direction other days. The next really big fundamental data coming from the USDA will be the Final Crop Report and Supply Demand Report in early January. Has the USDA underestimated both exports and internal feed demand? Will the carry over move from 1.8 billion bushels (comfortable) to 1.6 or 1.5 or even lower? Numbers toward the 1.5. billion bushel area would reinvigorate the corn market.

Soybeans are currently in a rally mode moving into fairly rarified air. We have already surpassed the highs of 2004, are approaching the highs of 1997 and within sight of the $12.90 high of 1973. The soy market is telling us that a carry over of less than 200 million bushels is impossible. Usage must be rationed. The market is searching for the price that will expand South American acres and more acres in North America for the 2008 crop. You will no doubt agree that 180 bushel corn is a more achievable goal than 60 bushel beans. So the market is engaged in an acreage war between beans and corn. It will likely heat up as we move towards the North American producers' decision time. All basis levels reflect the strong C$. With soybeans this is particularly obvious. As I write this the C$ is trading about par with the US$. Gone are the days of $2.50 basis levels on beans. That is no reason not to track bean basis. Watch the Toledo bids versus the crusher bid in Hamilton or Windsor in the daily reports produced by John Jordan available by email or on the soy boards website. You can calculate back where your price should be. I doubt that we have enough beans in Ontario to meet the crushers' needs. That means they will have to bring them from somewhere else. That means freight. Therefore, what are your beans worth?

Increased price volatility exacerbates the potential for pain

From my side of the desk I see the psychological torture producers are inclined to put themselves through when they miss a market, when they sell too soon, when they don't sell on the top day. Higher grain prices have raised the stakes in this game. Increased price volatility exacerbates the potential for pain. Always reward a strong market, but give it some time to run. If you have a particular financial need at a time in the future, don't wait until the day before to cash in some crop. Pay attention to markets, look at a corn or bean chart at least weekly. What is it telling you? Are there similar chart patterns in the past? If so what happened next? Look for areas of support and resistance. Use them as clues to the strength of the move and for points to sell at. If you sell something and the market moves up, remember that the rest of your inventory just got more valuable. If you made a decision to sell based on your analysis of the market review that anlysis to see what worked and what didn't. We aren't born with all of our knowledge and skills. We have to develop them.

I believe there are huge opportunities ahead of us. As is so often the case, with opportunity comes risk. Know your cost of production. Be assured that it has gone up. Improve your marketing skills. Discipline yourself to look at prices at regular intervals. How much time do you spend considering seed, cultural practices, working in the field, and all those other activities associated with being a grain producer? How much time do you practice at being a grain seller? When someone asked Ben Hogan about his success on the golf course he said "I'm just lucky, I guess, but the more I practice the luckier I get"

Always reward a strong market but give it some time to run

GRCA Buffer Verification Project Shows Positive Preliminary Results For Buffer Strips.

Fencing streams from livestock and establishing buffer plantings along stream banks has long been recommended as an effective environmental practice. Just how effective is the essence of a three-year project undertaken by the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA). The GRCA Buffer Verification Project is one of 10 Greencover Canada demonstration projects carried out in partnership with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Greencover Canada is supported through the Agricultural Policy Framework, an agreement among the federal, provincial and territorial governments to make Canada's agricultural sector a work leader in environmentally sustainable production.

For almost 20 years, GRCA has been helping landowners with the implementation of buffers along streams and creeks. Currently more than 100 kilometres of stream have been fenced or buffered throughout the Grand River Watershed.

For purposes of the verification project, a total of 19 sites were chosen based on their age, variety, and past assessments. The verification process includes aquatic assessments of fish populations, invertebrate surveys, vegetation inventories and photo records. The focus of the project is to replicate assessments done previously and to provide a benchmark for future assessments.

Figure 1: Campbell Drain Tributary, Pre-Restoration - 2001

Figure 2: Campbell Drain Tributary, Post-Restoration - 2005

Fish Population Assessment

Fish sampling is done by electroshocking a stream at various points. The fish are momentarily stunned which allows them to be netted and inventoried. Fish are typically present in even the smallest streams and are one of the most widely used and useful organisms for measuring water quality. Fish are a diverse group of organisms and have a wide range of life requirements. Some fish are sensitive to changes in water temperature, substrate composition, stream flow, or various water chemistry parameters, while others are tolerant of change in their environment. The structural and functional variety of fish communities makes them excellent indicators of water quality and provides an integrated view of stream health.

Electrofishing

Preliminary results from the electrofishing data show a general increase of 78 per cent of total species across all sites from pre-restoration to post-restoration. As well there has been a nine per cent increase in number of species found across all sites from pre to post-restoration. Electrofishing involves passing an electric current through the water (see figures 3 & 4) to draw the fish to the surface where they can be captured alive in a dip net. The electric current passes through the water and is picked up by a positively charged anode. Fish within the current are stunned and orient in the direction of the current flow, swimming toward the annodes. Tracey Ryan of the GRCA, says "People who watch electrofishing

Preliminary results show an increase of 78% of total species across all sites from pre to post restoration.

operations are almost always surprised by how many fish are actually present in a particular stream. I often wish I had a dollar for

Figure 3: Larry Halyk, Wellington Stewardship Coordinator, (right) using a back pack electrofishing unit to collect fish from Marden Creek on the Gencor property north of Guelph.

Figure 4: Electrofishing upstream on the farm of Solomon Matin

every person who observes an electro fishing survey and walks away shaking his head in disbelief as to how many fish are actually in a stream or stream selection."

Aquatic Invertebrate Assessment

Aquatic invertebrates are organisms which live part or all of their lives in water and have no internal skeletal system. By determining the species or groups of bugs that live in a water body it is possible to evaluate the ecological health and productivity of a system. Aquatic invertebrates do not generally move around as much as fish and they are easy to collect. These invertebrates can be used to detect both recent and more historic impacts on a stream as well as being used to track the recovery of a disturbed system.

Vegetation Assessment

Conducting an inventory of vegetation along the banks of streams makes it possible to determine the presence of native or invasive plants as well as the growth of trees. Not only does it record the presence of agricultural weeds, it records changes in vegetation that occur over time. Photographs from pre and post restoration also show a positive change in vegetative cover and naturalization of the buffer. The photographs also provide evidence of bank stabilization and channel reformation from the previously degraded sites. (See figures 1 and 2)

Social and Economic Impact

An important aspect of the project is the gathering of information regarding the social and economic benefits of stream restoration. In particular, a survey will be conducted among those farmers with established buffer strips on their farms. The object of the survey will be to determine if there is improvement in level of enthusiasm for the practice and to see if attitudes have changed as buffers have matured. It is anticipated that information gathered in this way will provide guidance for the establishment of new buffers.

Canada

Ontario

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Grand River Conservation Authority

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Crop Production:
- Getting Beyond the Soybean Yield Plateau
- Wheat - Shifting Into Passing Gear
- The Lemonade Guide to Weed Control
- Drought Tolerance in Crop Production Systems

Farm Management:
- Marketing Update
- Farm Succession Planning
- Lessons From a Farm Business Advisor
- Farm Labour Management
- Tax Tips
- Woodlot Management

Environment:
- The Bioeconomy
- On-Farm Biogas
- Source Water Protection
- Improve Your Soils
- Future of EFP

Livestock:
- Ranchers School of Hard Knocks
- Future of Livestock Industry in Ontario
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