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Center for Excellence Showcases New Agronomic Practices

LANSING, MICH. – The Corn Marketing Program of Michigan (CMPM) has partnered with the Lenawee Conservation District, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee to conduct an extensive research and demonstration project known as the Lenawee County Center for Excellence. Through the Center for Excellence, new practices are tried in test plots for growers to learn and evaluate data, without it affecting their farming operation's bottom line.

The Center for Excellence, which began in 1998, is a research and testing program consisting of plots on two farms in Lenawee County; Bakerlads Farm and Raymond & Stutzman Farms. The plots test various production practices including conservation tillage, soil fertility levels and testing new seed genetics to determine how producers can increase productivity while conserving Michigan's natural resources. The research projects and plots at the Center for Excellence are done over a period of time to ensure the most accurate data is obtained.

“Corn and soybean farmers from across Michigan have benefited from check-off and privately funded research at the Lenawee County Center for Excellence for thirteen years,” said Clark Gerstacker, CMPM president, National Corn Growers Association Corn Board member and corn grower from Midland. “The Center for Excellence allows corn farmers to see the effects of the new agricultural innovations and techniques without having to assume the risk.”

Each year, the Center for Excellence hosts a Field Day where farmers can learn more about the research being done at both locations and see the plots first-hand before harvest. The 2010 Field Day focused on developing and refining viable conservation tillage systems that can be adopted on farms at a local level. The four different tillage practices that were researched at the 2010 corn and soybean plots grown at Bakerlads Farm included:

1. Deep Tillage (In-line Ripper)
2. Orthman Strip-Tillage
3. No-Till
4. Disk-Ripper

The results of these tillage trials showed the greatest yield advantage in trials that utilized a disk ripper, though it should be noted that there have been yield differences from year to year and there has never been a single tillage method that has developed a trend of significantly higher yields.

Another trial done by the Center for Excellence in 2010 was the continuation of a two-year replicated fungicide study. The two fungicides used in the study were Headline and Quilt. While the yield increases seen in 2010 were not as substantial as those seen in 2009, the study still consistently shows a large yield increase when using a fungicide on corn in late growth stages.

“The data compiled at the Center for Excellence this year will prove to be very valuable to Michigan’s nearly 12,000 corn farmers,” said Gerstacker. “By providing science-based information on the tillage methods and fungicides researched in the 2010 trials, the Center for Excellence will allow farmers to make educated choices about tillage practices and fungicides they incorporate for use on their own operations. Research like that done at the Center for Excellence encourages corn growers to make positive changes on their own farms and it is through these types of advancements that farmers are able to achieve positive yield trends year after year, something that is very important as we strive to feed and fuel the world with our corn crop.”

Headquartered in Lansing, the CMPM is a legislatively-established statewide program that utilizes one-cent per bushel of Michigan corn sold. Investments are made in the areas of research, education, market development, and new uses in an effort to enhance the economic position of Michigan corn farmers. The CMPM works cooperatively with the Michigan Corn Growers Association (MCGA), a grassroots-membership association representing the state’s corn grower’s political interests since the 1970’s. Michigan’s corn industry adds more than one billion dollars to the state’s economy annually and in 2010, Michigan’s corn farmers harvested a record setting crop of more than 315 million bushels. For more information, visit the website of the MCGA and the CMPM at www.micorn.org.

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