

Grower Files

Jay Goetz (right) with Conserv FS specialist Jeff Konkol *Bristol, Wis.*



Grower manages many factors each season

The growing season is action-packed with a lot to deal with, and Jay Goetz is keeping up. He's dealing with the normal things like soil conditions, cyst nematode pressure and previous yield performance, along with the not so normal things like whether or not his field will be a housing development in the next few years.

Goetz lives along the Illinois-Wisconsin border and farms in Bristol, Wis., and Wadsworth, Ill. He is right between Chicago and Milwaukee, so there is a lot of urban development. "In one 200-acre field, I have subdivisions on all four sides," Goetz says.

He uses variable-rate technology and yield map data to help him get the most from his land, which is a mix of fertile black earth and gravelly soil near the Des Plaines River. He's especially diligent on the land he owns more so than on the land he rents that might be in development soon. "It costs more money to do, but it takes better care of the land," Goetz says.

His FS crop specialist, Jeff Konkol, helps him keep track of everything going on in his fields. Goetz gets corn, soybean, alfalfa, forage seed (there's a large market for horse feed in his area), and all his fertilizer and crop protection needs from Conserv FS. "Jeff stays on top of the varieties. We used to do the same from year to year, but with technology moving so rapidly, we normally try to plant eight to 10 varieties at different maturities, and not put all of our eggs in one basket. He tells me first before I know there could be a problem in a field," Goetz says.

One common problem in the area is soybean cyst nematode. "A lot of cabbage is grown in this area, which has introduced cyst nematode to soybean-growing fields. That's why I make sure the beans I recommend for those affected fields have cyst resistance," Konkol says.

This season, the biggest problem was lack of rain over the summer. "This year was a little tough for beans, but the corn made up for it. It was cold and wet early, then dry. The whole month of August, there was no rain. Corn for Jay did OK, though," Konkol notes.

"The corn was the star for sure," adds Goetz. "I didn't think it would be when we dried up, but the roots were down deep enough to grab the early water."