

Grower Files

Bruce Heckert, Venedy, Ill.



Complex soils require added expertise

It all comes down to rainfall on Bruce Heckert's farm. He and his brother, George, rely on AgriPride FS for seed, crop protection and fertilizer for their 1,100-acre corn, soybean and wheat operation in Venedy, Ill. Their biggest challenges are lack of water and variable soils. "We run the whole gamut," says Bruce. "Some of our soils are always a couple days away from a drought. We need varieties that can withstand stress."

Adds FS crop specialist Jim Stein, "Our soil is mixed; we can have six different types on the same 40. On the better bottom ground, we have some high-production areas, so we're looking for a racehorse type of situation. On tighter clay soils, we need a more defensive hybrid. On soybeans, we're looking for the same kind of thing — more yield potential on the better ground, and we're looking for a shorter type of variety ahead of wheat. We're defensive on our light soils and double-crop fields because they are withstanding a lot of heat and dryness. Our soil has an inability to hold water."

Each winter the Heckerts sit down with Stein and choose hybrids and varieties field by field. And often by acre blocks, depending on yield goals and soil variance. Bruce says they have about 40 fields — the largest is 125 acres and their smallest is 6 acres. "We're lucky if we can put one variety in the same field," he says. For instance, they usually divide their larger 125-acre field into an 80-acre section and 45-acre section, and use two different varieties.

Their yields on corn can vary from 125 to 175 bushels per acre. This year was exceptionally wet, so they averaged 150 bushels per acre on soils that normally get 125.

Stein's FS HiSOY® soybeans really outperformed this year, too. "Jim's recommendation on the 4366 soybean was really a good surprise and an outstanding soybean variety," says Bruce. "This year it [HS 4366] came in at 72 bushel an acre, when last year was about 27, mostly because of the drought."

Bruce likes working with AgriPride FS because he knows and trusts the people there. AgriPride FS also offers a rewards program when their customers bundle seed, fertilizer and crop protection purchases. That makes a difference to the Heckerts' bottom line. "We get dollars per acre back depending on volume," he says.

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