Conservation Tillage Conference

Hardin County - High input costs coupled with low grain prices anticipated in 2016 means that growers have to make smarter, calculated choices to grow profitable crops this year. Also important is the need to build and maintain healthy soils to help ensure good water quality, said Randall Reeder, a retired Ohio State University Extension agricultural engineer. Reeder is an organizer of the annual Conservation Tillage Conference (CTC) offered March 2-3 by The Ohio State University’s College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES).

As farmers prepare for spring planting, much of their planning will focus on where and how to cut costs for 2016 without reducing net income, Reeder said. “Many growers are tightening their belts because of tight budgets, low prices and not much money in the bank,” he said. “For a few years, grain farmers were making good money. But in 2015 grain prices fell sharply, with 2016 prices looking to stay low.”

CTC will offer numerous presentations designed to help growers learn where to cut back while ensuring they have healthy soils, healthy water and hopefully a healthy bank account, Reeder said.

The program includes a “Corn University” and “Soybean School” that will be offered during the annual conference. Topics to be discussed during the Corn University March 2 include corn yield forecasting; new molecular methods for insect control; nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium management highlights for corn; taking a second look at hybrid performance and technology; along with crop-effective and environment-responsible nutrient placement in strip-till and no-till corn.
Topics to be discussed during the Soybean School March 3 include Ohio soybean limitation survey results; managing weeds in soybeans; fertility management, managing soybean insects; the future of soybean breeding; and the top 10 ways to improve yield, without breaking the bank.

The Corn University and Soybean School are just two of a total of eight concurrent sessions during the conference. More than 900 participants are expected to attend the event, which is organized by OSU Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC), with assistance from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD). OSU Extension and OARDC are the outreach and research arms of the college.

The conference will offer the latest research, insight, tips and techniques on precision fertility, cover crops and manure, water management, technology and equipment, nutrient management, and advanced cover crops. It features some 60 presenters, including 25 CFAES researchers and Extension educators, as well as farmers and industry representatives. Certified Crop Adviser (CCA) continuing education credits are available with an emphasis on soil and water, and nutrient management hours.

Topics presented during the two Cover Crop sessions include understanding the legal aspects of manure application; on-farm experiences with cover crops and manure; enhancing soil mycorrhizal fungi to retain nutrients; improving soil carbon for healthier soils; and sustainable agriculture programs from Campbell Soup Company.

The Conservation Tillage Conference will be held at the McIntosh Center of Ohio Northern University in Ada. The full schedule and registration information can be found at ctc.osu.edu. Participants may register by mail through February 21 or online through February 26 for $65 for one day or $85 for both days. Walk-in registration is $80 for one day or $105 for both days.

Other conference sponsors include the Ohio Corn Marketing Program, Ohio Soybean Council, Farm Science Review, John Deere, Ag Credit, Seed Consultants, and the Ohio No-Till Council. For more information about this year’s CTC, contact Mark Badertscher, Hardin County OSU Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Educator at 419-674-2297.

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