

# Making a difference

## Providing Information to Help Farmers Select Corn Hybrids

### The Situation

Corn production has grown significantly in North Dakota in the last two decades. Corn is now grown in every county of the state and is second only to wheat in the number of bushels produced annually. Higher yielding corn hybrids have been a key feature of the dramatic increase in corn production in the state. Since there are many companies involved in corn hybrid development and marketing, there is a rapid turnover in the hybrids that are available and literally hundreds for farmers to choose from. Hybrids can vary significantly in their yield and other characteristics. Therefore, selecting the right hybrid can be critically important to the profitability of an operation. Unbiased information on hybrid performance can help guide corn growers as they strive to select the right hybrids for their farms.

### Extension Response

In 2014 the extension agronomist for cereal crops provided leadership to a revised corn hybrid testing program for eastern North Dakota. The North Dakota Corn Utilization Council provided funds for critical equipment to enable the establishment of replicated trials and for the support of a research specialist to oversee the day to day implementation of the program. This program generates performance data on more than 100 corn hybrids representing many of the hybrids that will be marketed by most of the major seed companies in the coming year. These data are from replicated trials grown at multiple location within a growing region. Results from multi-location data have been found to be much more predictive of the future performance of a hybrid than results from a single location. Therefore, this program provides a powerful tool to farmers to help them select hybrids that will perform well in their fields in future seasons. Data from this testing program is posted on a website within a few days after harvest, thus allowing farmers to have access to this information in advance of the early season discount period for seed purchases. Additionally, these data are published in a circular that is distributed widely within the state and contains all of the corn hybrid trial data from throughout the state.

### Impacts

During 2015, 1,149 hard copies of the NDSU Extension publication, Corn Hybrid Trial Results for 2014 were provided to growers and dealers in North Dakota. Additionally, there were 721 visits to the Corn Hybrid Testing program's website, with the vast majority of these visits to view or download data from the hybrid trials conducted by the program. Five field days were held at the field sites where the hybrid trials were conducted so that growers could see the hybrids, meet company representatives and learn about the best techniques for selecting hybrids. Given the newness of the program we have not been able to quantify the impact of improved hybrid selection at the farm level. Nevertheless, good quality data are now readily available to assist growers and crop advisors in this process.

### Feedback

Growers have expressed appreciation for access to data on the performance of such a large sampling of the available corn hybrids. One grower commented that multi-locational data from the program has helped him identify hybrids that are most likely to be stable performers in the years ahead. A seed company representative mentioned that hybrids that performed well in the testing program sold out fast, adding that farmers are obviously using the data to help them choose hybrids.

### Contact

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