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Cost of Production

Most producers understand that 2016 is likely going to be a tough budget year and there is plenty of economic data to support that. The years beyond that are anyone's guess, but the cyclical nature of the farm economy tends to lean towards a few 'leaner' years!

Since we can't control commodity prices, 'cuts' have to come from the input side or increases have to come on the yield side. But what exactly does that look like? Are there ways to reduce input costs? Can we increase yields? The answer to both is yes. The challenge – doing so in such a manner that it makes economic sense!

Now is the time to re-evaluate your production practices to make sure they make economic sense. Take seed cost for example. The average of the top ten yielding hybrids in the dryland Kansas Crop Performance Test trial in Shawnee County in 2015 was 211 bushels per acre. The average of the bottom 10: 174. A Farmer's Independent Research of Seed Technologies trial in Jefferson County showed a 21 bushel difference from the top 10 average to the bottom 10 average. Does that mean the highest yielding entry was the most economical? Nope! But it does show that there can be vast differences in genetics, sometimes by site and almost always affected by weather. Make sure you are doing a thorough job of working with your seed dealer to evaluate and select hybrids and varieties that fit best on your farm.

Fertilizer is another big line item. Are you applying the right product at the right rate, at the right time? KSU Research actually shows an increase in the value of soil testing when commodity prices are low, because it results in application of the right rate to areas that need it most. To blindly 'cut' fertility rates is not a good idea. To continue the same old program isn't much better. Know what your soil test levels are so you can adequately apply nutrients using a realistic yield goal. The last few bushels of yield are nice – but they aren't always economical!

There are lots of production factors to evaluate as you look to reduce costs. Populations, row spacing, plant protection products – even rental rates – are costs to consider. Doing so responsibly, with good information to back up your decisions, will be the key. Don't hesitate to let us know what KSU research data we can provide to help!

Poinsettia Care

Christmas poinsettias are a standard decoration for many. They can even last long after Christmas with some proper care.

Locate them in a sunny window or the brightest area of the room. Daytime temperatures should be from 65-75 degrees F and 60-65 degrees F at night. Temperatures above 75 shorten bloom life and temperatures below 60 result in root rot. Avoid allowing them to touch cold windowpanes and move plants away from drafty windows at night to avoid cold damage.

Moisture is a key management component as well. They don't like wet feet, but if they are allowed to wilt, they'll drop leaves. Monitor by daily checking. Do so by sticking your finger about one inch deep into the soil. If it is dry to this depth, the plant needs water. When it becomes dry to the touch, water the plant with lukewarm water until some water runs out of the drainage hole, then discard the drainage water.