

Meadowlark District Extension News
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Corn Planting Delays – What’s the Prognosis?

As I write this – it’s raining...again... So while it’s only the early part of April, the itch to get spring field work done has already caused at least a little speculation about what our corn planting window might look like.

Based on a quick glance at three different National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center models, it looks like our moisture chances will continue to be above normal through April. Since that’s when we really like to get corn planted, it would appear that, at the very least, our ‘typical’ planting window may well be smaller, but what does ‘typical’ really mean?

For us in northeast Kansas, ‘typical’ is April, or maybe early May. Get much beyond that and we start to get concerned – with good reason based on what we’ve seen in the past. The *actual* window, however, has a lot to do, with what happens through the growing season. A few years ago, a two-year study was conducted at Belleville, Manhattan, and Hutchinson to look at the effect of delayed planting on three hybrid maturities: 100, 108, and 112-days in length.

The study had three distinct growing season environments. The low stress environments were those where rainfall was favorable during the entirety of the growing season. Early stress environments were those where early growth was affected by cool and wet weather, but were followed by favorable growing conditions. When rainfall and temperature were favorable early in the season, but things got hot and dry later in the summer, the environment was considered high stress. What they showed for how wide our window might be was interesting.

In the low stress environments, yields were reduced by less than 20 percent when planting was as late as mid-June. Planting from early April to May 20th, using any of the hybrids, resulted in yields that were not statistically different. In the early stress (cool/wet followed by favorable) environments, yields increased even as planting was delayed until late June. All maturities responded similarly. High stress environments (hot/dry summer) showed that yields dropped by about a percent per day of planting delay depending on maturity. Shorter-season hybrids had the best yields when planted before late May, but all hybrids showed yield reductions of more than 50 percent when planting was delayed until early June.

What can we expect for the rest of the summer? Difficult to say. The Climate Prediction Center is a great resource (<https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/>), but no one has predictions very far out that are terribly accurate. What does it mean for us? Nothing yet, but if planting continues to be delayed – and we get a better idea as to what the rest of summer might bring – we can start to look more closely as to how wide that optimum planting window might be.

If you want to dig a little deeper in to the research report numbers, you can find a KSU Agronomy eUpdate on the topic via request to a District Office. It is also available online at https://webapp.agron.ksu.edu/agr_social/m_eu_article.throck?article_id=1400.

Pest of the Week – Iris Leaf Spot

It’s time to make sure your old, dead iris leaves are removed. They are the transport mechanism for the iris leaf spot fungus that our current weather pattern will only encourage.

While it seldom kills plants, it does reduce their vigor. Plants heavily affected last year should receive a fungicide application when leaves first start to appear following label directions.