



For Immediate Release

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Don't Side Step Your Sidedress Program

Short-changing the nutritional needs of some crops during the growing season can leave you hungering for more profits. Applying the right nutrients at the right time can boost crop yields and quality by bolstering the ability of plants to resist diseases, tolerate extremes in temperature and moisture and compete with weeds.

Corn

Wet weather in the Corn Belt this spring highlights the value of splitting total nitrogen (N) application between planting and sidedressing. Warm, soggy soils that remain saturated for more than a few days can lose N through denitrification. Sidedressing N can make up for some, if not all, of those losses. As Don Eckert, agronomist with Ohio State University, points out, it also lets you tailor your N rates to your latest yield expectations. "If your stand doesn't look all that good or you planted really late, you can cut back on your total N rate at sidedressing to save some money, since the crop won't use the full rate anyway," he says. "On the other hand, if your stand came up early, it's looking good and growing vigorously, you can sidedress the remaining full recommended rate because the crop stands a good chance of using all of it."

Early application of sidedress N is better than later. In a series of trials, University of Nebraska researchers applied various rates of ammonium nitrate just after planting (50, 100 or 200 lb. N per acre) and again at 13 days or 30 days after emergence (180, 130 or 30 lb. N per acre) for a total application in each trial of 230 lb. N per acre. A single application of 230 lb. N per acre at planting produced high yields. However, in general, combining some N at planting with the rest applied 13 days after plant emergence resulted in the highest yields.

Soybeans

In the Southeast, sidedressing potassium (K) when double cropping soybeans with wheat can boost profits. K needs are greatest during early pod fill. As a result, the Potash & Phosphate Institute suggests applying half the K with phosphorus (P), either preplant or to the previous wheat crop, and sidedressing the rest before the pods begin to fill. On sandy soils in areas of heavy rainfall, the recommendation is to apply half the K preplant and sidedress the other half at first flower or before the rows close.

Cotton

University of Georgia recommendations for cotton fertilization include 10 lb/A of sulfur (S), applied preplant or sidedressed. When sidedressing S, Extension agronomist Glen Harris favors a granular or liquid soil application, rather than a foliar fertilizer. "I don't think foliar S feeds very well and most of these materials have a high burn potential," he says. K-Mag, a soil-applied granular fertilizer, eliminates any chance of fertilizer burn. This naturally occurring source of sulfur, as well as potassium and magnesium, features low chloride levels (guaranteed less than 2.5% Cl) and a low salt index (less than half the salt index of muriate of potash).

Alfalfa

Alfalfa can benefit big time from in-season fertilization. In field trials at nine California locations, involving a variety of grower management practices and a range of soil types, every dollar invested in K-Mag produced an average of almost \$4 in extra yield and higher quality. In one set of trials, where soils generally tested high in Mg, 150 lb/A of K-Mag was applied after the first and third cuttings. Samples were collected after the second, fourth and sixth cuttings. The K-Mag boosted alfalfa yields by 18 percent at sites in one area and 26 percent at another, compared to the control. Quality improvements were measured at one location and showed that K-Mag applications increased both Total Digestible Nutrients and Relative Feed Value.

K-Mag can play an important role in mid-season fertilization programs by providing the proper balance of K, S and Mg needed to reduce plant stress and increase crop yields and quality. In addition to providing these nutrients in a highly available, water-soluble sulfate form, K-Mag can restore the sulfur and magnesium not replaced by many of today's high-analysis fertilizers.



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