

Spring time to look ahead to planting season

If fall is a time to look back and reflect on the season's bountiful produce, then spring is certainly a time to look ahead in anticipation of what is to come. As the winds start to blow and temperatures rise, you'll begin to notice more and more activity across the farms that characterize our region. Tractors will once again be on the move putting seed in the ground. Brown, dry fields will soon turn to green as this year's crop emerges and pushes toward the sun. In no time at all, thousands of acres of land will be full of crops that maintain our local economy and contribute to the world food, feed and fiber supply. Our strong winds seem to blow away the remnants of last year and usher in the beginning of yet another challenging cropping season on the High Plains.

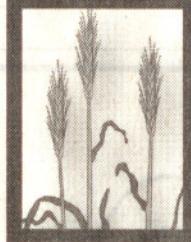
This is a very critical time in the life of the farmer, as there are no more important decisions he can make than those made during the days leading up to and during planting season. Any mistakes now can have huge

consequences on into the summer and will be evident come harvest time. Farmers will be

deciding **s u c h** things as: what crop to grow, **h o w** much seed, fertilizer and water to use, and what

types of pests (i.e., weeds and insects) they will have to contend with. These decisions are increasingly becoming more challenging to make; fortunately, there are many people in place to help producers with these decisions. Just to name a few, these are: County Agents, crop consultants, and seed and fertilizer company representatives. Of course, the faculty and staff at the NMSU Agricultural Science Center at Clovis are making observations and recommendations that will hopefully benefit growers for a long time to come. Researchers are constantly

AG SENSE



By Mark Marsalis

looking for ways to help improve farmer productivity and profitability.

The fragility of the young seedlings that will be popping up reminds me of the delicate balance of crop yield and resource management. In a time when water levels are declining and fertilizers and fuel are becoming more costly, it may seem that things are taking a turn for the worse for our agricultural industries. Resources and arable land have never been more limiting than they are today. To add insult to injury, agriculture has certainly taken it on the chin during the economic downturn along with everyone else. While I have confidence that we will survive these hard times like all the times before, the bottom line is that we have to be more efficient than we ever have before. Every unit of resource must be used as efficiently as possible and must contribute to productivity. Farmers have to be able to match their yield goals with the limited amount of resources available to them. While this task may seem

overwhelming, it is not impossible. In fact, it is accomplished every year even in the most trying times. Producers are constantly fighting uphill battles when dealing with conditions such as drought, blowing sand, and hail. However, they always seem to make the most out of what they have and with the hand they are dealt.

The farmer is an eternal optimist. He sees the upcoming season as a clean slate to start fresh and make another go at it. As you see the land turn colors before your eyes, share in that optimism and remember the hard work that

is going into making our lives – well – Livable. We should look at the shifting landscape this year as a sign that agriculture is still alive and well in eastern New Mexico and that through innovation, conservation, and persistence this area will continue to help supply the world with the products it needs.

Mark Marsalis is Extension agronomist at New Mexico State University's Agricultural Science Center at Clovis. He can be contacted at (505) 985-2292 or by e-mail: marsalis@nmsu.edu

**AFFORDABLE
PEST CONTROL**

**Now offering wildlife control
and yard cleaning services.**

CALL ANYTIME 24 HOURS A DAY
Now Serving Texas

763-1867 • clovisbugguy@hotmail.com • www.clovisbugguy.com

Motivations

Coffee Bistro

*Spending Quality Time
...with our coffee.*

