

Proper seed selection can pay off

With the recent changes in the economics of farming, every decision that affects the farm's profitability needs to be made wisely and carefully. With the high price of energy, fertilizer, and other inputs, including seed, producers can't afford to make decisions that aren't well thought out.

Selection of the variety of a crop to be grown is one of the easiest and most important decisions to be made relative to a crop's productive potential. Seed companies and university research programs are routinely developing and releasing new varieties. Because variety selection is easy and the potential financial benefits from proper selection are great, the Agricultural Science Center at Clovis conducts a number of crop variety performance trials.

Crop varieties evaluated at Clovis include: alfalfa, corn (for grain and

silage), cotton, forage sorghum, grain sorghum, sorghum x sudangrass, and winter wheat. As a general rule, across all crop species evaluated at Clovis, the top yielding varieties in a variety trial tend to out yield the trial average by 25 percent. What this means for producers is that the selection of superior varieties (as compared to average research trial yields) can increase annual on-farm earnings by \$53 million, based on historical crop acreages in eastern New Mexico.

As we approach the winter wheat planting season, producers will be making variety selections for the 2009 crop. In that process, care should be made to select varieties that are well-suited to each site location. In the 2007-2008 crop year, the Clovis center conducted winter wheat grain trials under irrigated and non-irrigated conditions. Summary data from those trials are posted on the center's WEB site at [<http://clovisssc.nmsu.edu/>] <http://clovisssc.nmsu.edu/>. The dryland variety trial produced an average yield of 31.8 bushels per acre, but seven entries produced yields in excess of 40 bushels per acre. The irrigated wheat variety trial produced

an average yield of 55.9 bushels per acre (even after harvest delays and two light hail storms), and 10 varieties produced yields greater than 70 bushels per acre. Four of the top producing varieties in each trial were the same.

With today's grain prices, potential yield boosts of eight bushels per acre or more certainly warrant spending time and effort to study up on variety performance, and that level of potential yield increase justifies paying a premium price for seed of known quality and origin.

In addition to the Clovis center's web site, <http://clovisssc.nmsu.edu>, additional regional wheat variety trial results can be obtained from the Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Center at Amarillo web site at <http://amarillo.tamu.edu/programs/agronomy/>.

Your local county extension office or Extension Specialist can also be good points of contact for additional information.

Rex E. Kirksey is the superintendent of the New Mexico State University Agricultural Science Centers at Clovis and Tucumcari. Contact him at 985-2292 or rkirksey@nmsu.edu.

AG SENSE



By Rex Kirksey