

Jamie Jordan now a contest winner

Updating production practices increases corn yields

BY EDDIE MCGRIFF
Alabama Extension
Regional Agent

JAMIE JORDAN WAS concerned. His corn yields weren't as high they should be. He wanted to develop a plan to raise his yields and increase his profitability.

His highest irrigated yield was 211 bushels per acre. His highest overall averages of both dryland (about two-thirds of his corn is dryland) and irrigated was between 150 bushels and 160 bushels per acre. Typically, his overall average was between 125 bushels and 150 bushels per acre.

We went through the Alabama Extension corn audit, a step-by-step approach to not only achieving greater corn yields, but more importantly higher profits. Jordan and I set a goal to average a minimum of 250 bushels per acre under irrigation and improve his dryland yields. His commitment to changes in his production practices paid immediate dividends.

He was the 2017 Georgia state winner in the National Corn Growers Association's yield contest in Non-Irrigated No-Till/Strip-Till division in 2017 at 259.46 bushels per acre, and his overall average was 199 bushels per acre. He continued to follow the program and made some additional changes in 2018. He improved his overall average to 230 bushels per acre and his irrigated corn averaged over 270 bushels per acre.

In 2018, the Centre, Ala., farmer, along with his wife, Kelley, won first place in the Irrigated No-till/Strip-Till category with 273.81 bushels per acre and had the high yield in the Non-Irrigated No-till/Strip-Till class with 251.48 bushels per acre.

Jordan farms just over the Alabama line in neighboring Floyd County, Ga., in the bends of the winding Coosa River. The farm is the location of the King Site, an archaeological finding that documented protohistoric Native American villages and Hernando de Soto's



Alabama farmer and corn yield champion Jamie Jordan shows off his Piper Pawnee, which he uses to spray his crops.

miles per hour. I did some planting speed trials last year and I picked up four to eight bushels per acre by slowing down to 4.5 miles per hour from 5 to 5.5 miles per hour," he said.

Farmers are aware of what's going on above ground with the plant, but Jamie observed he needed to also pay attention to his root system by digging up plants especially in poor performing areas of the field. Jamie addressed the problem of a restricted root zone caused by a hardpan or compaction by using an Eco-lo-Till subsoiler.

Jordan stated that one of the best investments he made before the 2017 crop was an injection system to pump fertilizer through his pivot irrigation. He was able to spread out his nitrogen applications and apply nitrogen and sulfur as 28-0-0-5 through the pivot

"I had too low of a plant population considering the capabilities of my land, so I upped my seeding rate from 32,000 to 33,000 on my irrigated land to 36,000 and from 26,000 on my good bottom land that wasn't irrigated to 27,000 to 28,000. We did some seeding rate trials last year and I continued to get yield increases of over 300 bushels per acre with a seeding rate of 40,000, but I can't depend on the amount of solar radiation we got in 2018 every year," he said.

Morningglory control has been a weakness in his weed control program, but this past year he was extremely pleased with his weed control.

"I was so proud of my weed control this past year because it was spotless except for a very few areas late in the season. I burn down with Roundup and Valor and then at-planting applied Dual plus atrazine along with either Roundup or Gramoxone. Then about

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Jordan farms just over the Alabama line in neighboring Floyd County, Ga., in the bends of the winding Coosa River. The farm is the location of the King Site, an archaeological finding that documented protohistoric Native American villages and Hernando de Soto's expedition through Georgia in the mid-1500s.

Jordan says they are blessed to work the more than 1,200 acre farm with just one worker, Felipe Morales. Their son, Jesse, began working full-time with International Paper five years ago as a financial analysis and helps when he comes home.

It is hard to make optimum yields when a grower starts out with a stand that does not emerge uniformly. The later a corn plant emerged after its neighbors, the more likely it was to be a small ear or nubbing. Jamie's goal was to try to get all his corn seedlings to emerge within two days of each other. Jamie made several changes to his planting operation in order to achieve this goal. He rebuilt his corn planter in the winter of 2017 and watched his planting speed.

"I slowed down to four miles per hour if the ground was rough and ran about 4.8 miles per hour in smooth ground. My overall planting speed was about 4.5 to 4.6 miles per hour where I used to average 5 to 5.5

per hour," he said.

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Jordan stated that one of the best investments he made before the 2017 crop was an injection system to pump fertilizer through his pivot irrigation. He was able to spread out his nitrogen applications and apply nitrogen and sulfur as 28-0-0-5 through the pivot closer to when the plant's peak demand was for nitrogen. His last application was applied at tasseling. He injected nitrogen through the pivot twice in 2017 and was able to spread it out to three applications in 2018.

Jordan also applied two tons per acre of chicken litter on his dryland corn and 3.5 tons per acre on his irrigated corn. He believes the benefits from the slow release of nutrients and also the micronutrients in chicken litter helped in achieving his high yields.

He took tissue samples and noted that the two nutrients which were most often low in his corn were sulfur, which sometimes was out of balance with his nitrogen, and magnesium. He addressed this problem by applying 200 pounds per acre of K-Mag on his irrigated corn and 100 pounds per acre on his dryland corn at planting.

There is a limit, he said, to how high a grower can increase planting population, depending on solar radiation on irrigated ground and rainfall in dryland.

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Jordan grew up flying with his dad, Tom, who was an advanced aviation instructor during World War II, getting pilots ready for combat in an AT-6. While flying with his father as a toddler, he developed a love for flying. He started flying lessons after graduating Berry College in 1977 when he and his dad brought a 1941 Piper J-3 Cub.

Jordan started aerial spraying of his own crops, mainly cotton, in 1987. He applied a fungicide to his corn in the past, but the last two years he has added a pyrethroid to help control stinkbugs, which he believes are doing more damage than he previously realized. He also added boron with this application.

The best advice he can give growers is to be timely with their production practices. Most farmers do the right things, but what gets a grower to the next level is timeliness.