

Plan now for on-farm research

Written by Gothenburg Times
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LINCOLN—Carl and David Sousek farm about 900 acres of corn and soybeans near Prague.

Like most grain producers, experience plays an important role in their operation. But they also have come to rely on the importance of research, especially research on their own farm.

The Souseks are participating with a network of growers in the Nebraska On-Farm Research Network (NOFRN). Research is typically conducted with the producer's equipment, on the producer's land, using the producer's management practices.

Carl Sousek said he liked the idea of tailoring a research project to meet specific questions about practices on our farm and then having access to university extension personnel who possess the expertise needed to plan the project and analyze the results.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension soil fertility specialist Charles Shapiro is part of a team of Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources faculty involved in the on-farm research project. Shapiro noted that on-farm research participants say the research is relevant to their operations. He said, "Combining the strength of University personnel with producers' interests is a cost-effective and practical system to answer "real world" questions."

Tom Hoegemeyer, professor of practice in UNL's Department of Agronomy and Horticulture, and other UNL Extension faculty give guidance to design experiments for scientific and statistical validity, as well as making sure the research can be done with typical ag equipment. He said, "Participants value cooperating with other producers in the network and studying the same questions. This allows comparisons over a range of real environments – giving participants more confidence in the results and conclusions."

NOFRN is sponsored by UNL Extension in partnership with the Nebraska Corn Growers Association and the Nebraska Corn Board. The goal of the network is to implement a statewide on-farm research program addressing critical farmer production, profitability and natural resources questions.

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UNL Extension Educator Keith Glewen has worked with farm operators conducting on-farm research for many years. He said, “The farm operator makes the final decision as to the research topic to be evaluated. We encourage growers to give careful thought as to what production practice may be limiting profitability or could enhance the use of soil and water resources on their farm”.

Some of the current research includes irrigation, nitrogen management in corn production, corn population and cover crops.

For more information on the project or how to participate, contact Glewen at 402-624-8030 or kglewen1@unl.edu, their local Extension office, the Nebraska Corn Board at 402-471-2676 or Nebraska Corn Growers Association at 402-438-6459. The NOFRN website is at: cropwatch.unl.edu/web/farmresearch.