



Cooperative Plus, Inc.
P.O. Box 336
Genoa City, WI 53128

Agronomy Update

<http://www.cooperativeplus.com>
"To be the partner our customers choose first"

February 2010



**Jim Doolittle, CCA
Agronomist**

Office: 262-279-2300
Cell: 262-206-4993
Nextel: 110*53117*20
Email:
jdoolittle@cooperativeplus.com
Twitter: @cornwuff



**Nancy Schleicher
Location Manager**

Office: 262-279-2300
Cell: 262-208-8406
Nextel: 111*17*15643
Email:
nschlecher@cooperativeplus.com

Communication in 2010

Communicating information to our customers in a timely fashion can often be a challenge. With busy schedules and the large territory that I cover, face to face meetings and even telephone conversations can often go only so far. While we have a quarterly company newsletter, it goes out to a wide variety of customers and covers everything from propane to feed to company financials.

This newsletter is intended to be focused only on agronomy and crop production-related issues. For example, in this newsletter, I have an article on crop budgeting and breakeven points for the 2010 season. Future issues may cover crop scouting, plant health and micronutrients, seed recommendations, and anything else Nancy and I come up with.

If you do need to get in touch with us directly, all of our contact information is in the boxes to the left. I included a few for myself that some of you may not have known about. If you use a Nextel phone, I'm a big fan of the Direct Connect feature. Feel free to 'beep' me, just remember to let me know who you are the first time you do so I can program your name into my phone. Email is something I would like to use more often with my customers, it is great for quick updates or pricing quotes. I'd also like



Harvesting corn in January

to do a weekly scouting update during the growing season, so send me your email addresses.

Finally, the hottest trend in communication right now is 'social media'. You've probably started to see companies telling you to 'follow us on Twitter!' Well, you can follow me on Twitter at @cornwuff. The ag industry has quite a presence on Twitter, and it's a great way to stay on the pulse of the industry. Go to twitter.com and type in cornwuff to find me, #ag or #farm to find more agriculture-related content. Not all of what I put on Twitter is strictly work-related, but I do talk about ag quite a bit, and often post video and pictures from my phone while in the field.

Lots of ways to talk to me. Hope to hear from you, soon!

-Jim Doolittle

Cooperative Plus University Corn College
February 23 from 10am to 3:30pm at Veteran's Terrace in Burlington
Six speakers on agronomy and grain topics.
Lunch and raffle prizes will be offered!

2010 Crop Budgeting

As prepay season comes to a close, most of us know what our crop inputs are going to cost us. The big question now is what do I need to sell corn for in 2010 to turn a profit? The good news this year is that input costs are down significantly from 2009. Fertilizer prices this winter were thirty to forty percent less than where they were priced last year. And while prices have started to rise, many of my customers booked very competitive prices, and current cash prices are still cheaper than last year.

I've been using a spreadsheet put together by Ohio State for a few years to use in calculating breakeven costs. The spreadsheet makes certain assumptions about machinery costs, fuel costs, and many other variables. You can download it yourself to plug in your own numbers at their website: <http://aede.osu.edu/Programs/FarmManagement/Budgets/index.htm>

These are the numbers I used to represent a 'generic' area farm:

Expenses	
Land Rent	\$180
Seed	\$95
Fertilizer	\$112
Herbicide	\$25
Drying	\$18
Fuel & Trucking	\$37
Equipment Costs	\$78
Other	\$36
Total	\$581

by Jim Doolittle

So our cost of putting the crop in is \$581, using my numbers. The biggest variables in this number are your land rental cost, and your fertilizer program. This scenario assumes liquid N, so if you're using NH₃, your cost will be \$14 less.

With your costs known, we're then back in the guessing game as to crop yield. If your average farm yield is 180 bu/acre, you will break even if corn is \$3.22 per bushel. As I write this, you can lock in Oct/Nov 2010 corn at CPI Genoa City for \$3.56. Going back to that 180 bushel corn crop would give you a profit of \$61.20 an acre. I'm not advising a sale at this point, just pointing out that even with the kick in the teeth the market has recently given us that it is still profitable to grow corn this year.

A quick look at soybean costs:

Land Rent	\$180
Seed	\$49
Fertilizer	\$45
Herbicide	\$18
Fuel & Trucking	\$19
Equipment Costs	\$60
Other	\$22
Total	\$393

50 bushel beans requires \$7.86 to break-even. At today's fall price of \$8.72, we're making \$43 an acre.

I hope this is some food for thought as you think about marketing the 2010 crop.



2009's muddy harvest.

"Fertilizer prices this winter were thirty to forty percent less than where they were priced last year."

Agriculture Blogs

Beyond the Rows
<http://blog.monsantoblog.com/>
 The Farm Gate
<http://www.farmgate.uiuc.edu/>
 The Voices of Agriculture
<http://www.fb.org/blog/>
 John Phipps
<http://johnwhippys.blogspot.com/>
 Ag Wired, Industry News
<http://agwired.com/>

The Dairyman's Blog
<http://gilmerdairy.blogspot.com/>
 Indiana Grain Company
<http://www.indianagrains.com>
 Orange Patch Dairy
<http://orangepatchdairy.blogspot.com/>
 Iowa Farm Bureau
<http://iowafarmbureau.wordpress.com/>
 Gate to Plate Blog
<http://causmatters.wordpress.com/>

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Precision Planting

With winter upon us, it is now time to look ahead toward the spring planting season. We would like to remind you that CPI is a fully authorized Precision Planting sales and service dealer. We offer a MeterMax Plus test stand that measures the performance of each of your meters. We service nearly every finger and vacuum meter on the market.

by Chad Bauer

We also sell the full line of Precision Planting products. The 20/20 series includes the SeedSense monitor, AirForce airbag down-pressure control system, and the RowFlow variable rate seeding and swath control. Call me at (262) 206-1952 for more information on all the Precision Planting products, and check out their website:

<http://www.precisionplanting.com/>



Chad Bauer assembling a planter meter.

From the Manager's Chair

by Nancy Schleicher

The crew and I have great expectations for the coming year at Genoa City. Although we tend to think of the winter months as our slow months, we definitely are not looking for things to do. We are working on the application equipment so it is ready for spring. That includes everything from applicators, NH₃ tanks, spreaders, tool bars, and trucks to fertilizer augers and 28% tanks. The crew has been working hard and we are confident that we are ahead of schedule and will be ready on day one of planting season. Winter is also our time for moving corn and soybeans out of our bins in anticipation of a large crop next year.

I've been with the co-op for 20 years and I cannot recall a year that has caused so much frustration to both the producer and the supplier. Starting with the high price of fertilizer, the wet planting season, the lack of heat units to produce a decent corn crop, and the poor quality of the corn coming out of the field makes it easy to sit here today and feel confident that 2010 will be a much bet-

ter year. But that is not the only reason I feel confident. We have one more year of experience for all of our applicators, the price of inputs has gone down, and our agronomists are learning some new technologies to help boost yield and make our patrons a profit this year. I am going into 2010 with a whole new excitement about our industry, our crew here at Genoa City, and you the customer. Thank you all for trusting us with your agronomy needs again this year. We sometimes neglect to let all of you know how much we enjoy and appreciate doing business with you.

If you have any concerns please feel free to contact any of us here in Genoa City. Mike Moser—our VP of Agronomy—and Brad Gjerme—our CEO—would also be happy to talk with you and address any concerns you may have. Our annual meeting is March 4th at the Veterans Terrace in Burlington, and is a great place to learn more about how your cooperative is run.

"I've been with the co-op for 20 years and I cannot recall a year that has caused so much frustration to both the producer and the supplier."



Precision Planting meters with SureFire seed belts cleaned and waiting to be re-assembled.