



Four areas to consider in 2015 planting prep

by Heather Lauf

What will it take to prepare for a successful 2015 planting season? According to Steve O'Neill of Corn Capital Innovations in Olivia, Minnesota, "Mindset is so important going into a crop year – it greatly influences success or failure. It will be important to approach the 2015 growing season with discipline, patience and strong belief in the crop's potential, despite challenging farm economics." O'Neill says there are four primary components to preparing for the new planting and growing season: planning, agronomics, patience and execution.

Planning

When thinking about spring time, it will be important to anticipate the emotion that can happen during planting season. "Just remember that ultimately, you create revenue by increasing production," O'Neill said. "Once you've created your crop plan, stick to it."

Mentally walk through your planting and growing season, recommends O'Neill. Put together 'what-if' scenarios around production factors. For example: What if we get 20 inches of rain by June 15? How does that change our cropping system? How does it change our management plan? Knowing your plan helps when it's time to execute and make decisions.

Agronomics

O'Neill recommends checking that all inputs are ready by taking yourself through these questions:

- *What type of seed am I using?*
- *What type of trait packages do I need, and which do I not need?*
- *Are my fertility requirements correctly selected and applied – or do I still need to apply them prior to planting?*
- *Will I use one form or multiple forms of nitrogen to feed the crop?*
- *What type of starter fertilizer am I going to use to get the crop off to a good start?*
- *Do I have any weed issues that need to be taken care of before planting, or can I delay those decisions until the crop is planted?*
- *Am I coming off of a poor production or high production year last year? How is that affecting my decisions?*
- *Am I setting realistic yield goals?*

Patience

As spring draws near – especially within a week or so of planting time – patience becomes extremely important, says O'Neill.

"By the time you've finished planting, you've already dictated about 75% of the yield potential of your crop," he said. "That's how important soil conditions are during planting."

When it appears to be time to start preparing the ground, take a step back and answer these questions: Are soil conditions really fit for us to be in the field? If we proceed too quickly on that ground, could it create a situation that limits our yield potential?

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Execution

Thinking through the previous three factors – planning, agronomics and patience – allows you to move quickly to execute your plan when the time is right, O'Neill said. Preparation for planting helps promote a smooth season when your operation is out and running in the field.

Overall, O'Neill recommends that farm leaders keep their eyes on the ultimate goal: "You don't win by being the lowest cost per acre producer, you win by being the lowest cost per bushel producer. That tends to happen in high-yielding scenarios, which can help lower your breakevens."

Planning for success this spring is a smart move through pre-planting prep work. Take some time to prepare your mind, too, for the challenges and opportunities that each new growing season presents.