

Is 100 lbs. of nitrogen really

Corn growers are constantly attempting to strike a balance between input use and profitability.

Despite recommendations that suggest applying as much as 1.2 lbs. of nitrogen per bushel of expected yield, many producers have found they can shave application rates to near 100 lbs. per acre or less and still maintain yields and profitability. And while others think their soils and farming practices may require a few more units, few still adhere closely to the old application recommendations.

Results of a recent statewide Iowa trial reinforced

those opinions. Some 100 growers participated in the 2005 Whole Field Reduced Nitrogen project for corn following soybeans. Developed and sponsored by the Iowa Soybean Association, the study was backed by a Conservation Innovation Grant from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

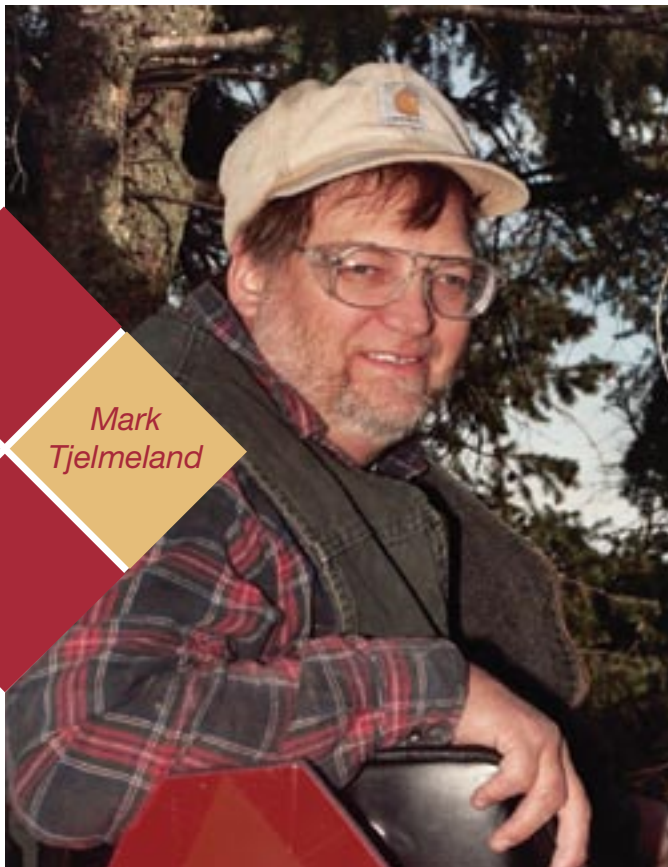
Growers willing to enroll up to 80 acres in the program, provide fertilizer application records and allow ISA to collect aerial imagery and samples for a pre-harvest stalk analysis are being paid an incentive based on how low they were willing to go in their nitrogen use. For no more than 100 lbs. of nitrogen, they were offered \$15 an acre. That payment increased to \$20 an acre if they would use no more than 95 lbs. per acre. And for those willing to apply less than 90 lbs. an acre, the payment was set at \$25 an acre.

“It was a popular trial,” says Christine Borton, contract and administrative manager for the Iowa Soybean Association’s On-Farm Network™. “Within a few days, nearly six times as many growers as we could accept had called or emailed to inquire about the program. We also received a number of letters. We recorded the time and date of telephone calls and letters, and compared those with the time and date of email received, so we could make sure those who contacted us first had first chance at enrolling in the program.”

“A desire to cut costs as well as a true concern about protecting the environment were the overriding reasons growers cited for participating,” adds Tracy Blackmer, director of research.

The “Almost Perfect” Program

Farmers from all across the state were accepted into the project. One was Mark Tjelmeland, Story



Mark
Tjelmeland