

# Now is the time to think of next year



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With fall fertilization and tillage beginning, think about evaluations for next year. New products and practices and their links to government programs make it important to understand their economic and agronomic costs and benefits.

Currently there is a movement to simplify recommendations and policies to make them more uniform across states in the Midwest.

Both growers and agencies alike would like to increase the simplicity. The question is, at what cost? Simplicity should reduce frustration and time requirements. But will it increase profitability or resource conservation?

## *One of the best ways to bring about improvement is to lead the way*

Growers have the capability to collect more data and direct how programs should be developed – based on real data. Practices like fall anhydrous and various tillage types lead to strong opinions from people even though most growers have not seen much data for their local area or conditions. To get data on that scale, growers are going to have to collect it to get it. The days of one trial in a crop district being the basis for a grower's decision are over. Growers who collect more data will be the ones to benefit from it the most. In the 2005 season, over 1000

evaluations were made just on nitrogen management alone in the state of Iowa.

For 20 years, Iowa State University research has shown that yield-goal based recommendations do not work. Only recently are these changes being implemented on a broad basis. Imagine how much money you could have saved by improving your nitrogen management by 30 lbs N/a or 50 lbs N/a over the last 20 years. With reports of nitrogen reaching as high \$600/ ton this year, it should get everyone's attention.

## **Saving money is increasing profits**

Growers conduct evaluations through the On-Farm Network™ to find a way to improve profitability. Higher yields are a reasonable goal, but you don't need to increase yields to make more money. Many of the growers involved in the ISA programs are cutting nitrogen use without sacrificing yield. Others believe they have already optimized their nitrogen management, and do the evaluations as proof of this. Either reason is justifiable and can be done with the technologies growers now possess and in the regulatory environment that is eminent in Iowa agriculture.

So now is the time to set up evaluations for 2006. You'll see examples of how growers have conducted trials in the past few years on our website at [www.isafarmnet.com](http://www.isafarmnet.com). Nitrogen rate, manure credits and tillage trials are examples of topics that should be planned and marked before fall fieldwork begins. Many of these trials are part of the On-Farm Network and/or one of our watershed programs.

To participate in these programs, contact ISA immediately. Phone: 800-383-1423, Email: [info@isafarmnet.com](mailto:info@isafarmnet.com).

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