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The Growers Solution

LATE FALL 2008

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We Really Don't Know!

by TGS Staff

We really don't know, at this point, so far as product pricing for the 2009 season is concerned, what the future holds for you the Growers customer and Growers. And it isn't because we haven't been paying attention. Practically all day every day we are in contact with our present raw material suppliers and potential new suppliers trying to get the latest handle on future pricing and availability of raw materials. Today phosphorus and potash raw materials come from foreign countries, and only some of the nitrogen materials are from domestic sources. Increased foreign demand for fertilizers and probably some artificial restriction of production is impacting our raw material availability and pricing.

Right now, all we can definitely say is the outlook is very confusing, and we do have product available at the current price.

Today it appears most, if not all, the raw material prices will be increased again the first of the year. Nobody knows how much. Our question will be; Can we absorb these additional costs or do we raise the price of GMS again in order to stay in business? Tough

decisions ahead for you and Growers.

With year end tax decision time coming up for many of you, our intention is to update you and our Growers Sales Representatives as early as possible. If for some reason we haven't updated you by the time you need to make decisions, please call your Growers Sales Representative or call Growers at 800-437-4769. ■

Solution Review

Compiled by Jim Halbeisen

We are reinstating a section in The Growers Solution we had in the early 1990's called the "Solution Review." It is meant to be quick looks into the fast paced business of North American agriculture. Copies of the complete articles from which these summaries were taken are available from your Growers Mineral Solutions representative.

that Organic Valley of LaFarge was buying milk from a 5000 cow industrial-scale dairy in west Texas... Cornucopia has long been critical of Dean Foods (Horizon) for heavily depending on dairies milking as many as 10,000 cows for their "organic" milk. *Wisconsin Agriculturalist*, August 2008.

BST

Elanco announced its parent company Eli Lilly has signed an agreement to acquire the world wide rights to Posilac (also known as somatotribove or bovine somatotropin or BST) and the product's supporting operations from Monsanto. Monsanto in a press release said, "Under the terms of the agreement, Lilly will purchase assets and liabilities of Monsanto associated with the Posilac brand and related business for an up front payment of \$300 million, plus additional contingent consideration. *dtmag*, 8/20/2008

Changes in Fertilizer

Farmers need to have their seat belt buckled for changes in the fertilizer industry says Iowa State University ag economist Roger Grindu. He says the good old days are gone in the retail fertilizer market. Undoubtedly you have heard about nitrogen and potash being sold for upwards of \$1,000 per ton for the 2009 crop. But Grindu says the change in the industry goes beyond the price chart on the wall of the dealer. He's becoming concerned about farmers being able to find fertilizer dealers... In addition, Grindu says farmers will face the risk of supply availability. *Cattle Network*, 8/26/2008.

Organic Milk

I can't tell you how disappointed I was when we at the Cornucopia Institute, the nation's leading organic farming watch dog, learned

Fertilizer Prices from a Northwest Ohio Coop 11/1/2008

Potash	\$800/ton
Urea	\$600/ton
AmSulfate	\$480/ton
DAP	\$1200/ton
10-34-0	\$ Not available
UAN 28	\$ 521/ton

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Quality Produce for the Pittsburgh Area

By Jennie Henry

Pete Beccari farms 100 acres near Oakdale, on the outskirts of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He has about 5 to 7 acres of orchard and a variety of berries, about 35 acres of vegetables with the rest for rotations. His farm is very hilly, so he farms contours to reduce erosion; forty feet of crops, forty feet of a rye/clover mix. He likes the rye as it helps smother out weeds.

Because of his hills and heavy clay soil, Pete uses a roll-over moldboard plow which he flips at the end of each row, always throwing the soil uphill. Concerned about compaction, he also uses a subsoiler as needed.

Pete reminisced, "I'm third generation, my father used to farm here in the 20's and 30's. He showed me places on the farm where they had lime kilns. He would dig a pit, layer in wood, lime, coal, soak it all with coal oil, and light it. It would burn for about a month, then he shoveled the mixture into a hammer mill, smashed it all apart and put it on the soil. As the years progressed, Dad fell away from the lime kiln practice; the intensity of labor being prohibitive."

Concerning limestone, Pete exclaimed, "High mag is everywhere, but high calcium limestone is hard to find." Growers Sales Rep, Mac Carter, did some soil testing and discussed with Pete the amount and where to find the lime he needed. Every year Pete limes a section of the farm with high calcium lime.

Continuing, Pete said, "I started slowly on the Growers Program and Growers Mineral Solutions (GMS), but now I've completely gone away from granular fertilizer, even in the greenhouse and drip lines.

"Anytime a sprayer moves (other than for herbicide), I put GMS in the tank; my orchard, anything that gets sprayed also gets GMS.

"Growers does make a difference. The produce has higher sugar content and longer shelf life."

"We've been noted for our high quality product which is what our farm market thrives on. We are competing against Wal-Mart and the big groceries." Pete sells his produce through his farm market, other farmers' markets and to a high end wholesaler supplying fashionable restaurants. Pete says customers are willing to pay the price as long as they get quality, "If the produce is not top quality, it stays in the field. And because Growers gets us more quality production, we have more produce and are able to donate more to charity."

Pete chuckled when asked why he started using Growers, "I will be honest. One reason I switched was the handling of fertilizer bags. Years ago working in a chemical plant, the dust

I was inhaling was killing me. My liver was toxic, so I have been concerned with my health since.

"I am much more at ease using Growers. We tried dry products mixed with water and other foliar sprays, but we had to be very careful about burning. Once you burn plants, it's hard for them to recover. It sets everything back.

"It always interested me that the Growers product was developed in a hydroponic environment. Having two greenhouses, I know mistakes in a greenhouse can be fatal."

In the greenhouses and under the plastic in the field, he injects GMS direct and doesn't mix it with water. Pete said, "My hard water coagulates with the Growers. Everyone has said to inject vinegar or acid, but I decided to inject Growers directly."

Pete uses an injector to introduce GMS into his drip lines.

"In a heat stress, I make the Growers available to the plants every second or third watering. I walk out, look at the field and get a sense if the plants are suffering or not.

"Normally I plant pumpkins by seed. But last spring the crows tore the field out, so I had to start them in the greenhouse and then into the field. I pushed them hard with the Growers and had the finest, biggest pumpkin crop ever and absolutely no problems. They were phenomenal!

"I put copper sulfate in our farm pond to control the algae, but once I put in too much and used the pond water to irrigate tomatoes which started to look like they had Atrazine burn. This was when I first started using Growers, so I called Mac and Ted my Growers representatives. Following their advice, I nailed that tomato patch with a direct spray of Growers and water on the leaves every two days. The root structure was burned and couldn't take up nutrients, but the leaves did, and the GMS nutrients pushed the roots past the burn. GMS literally pulled the patch through.

"When I spray my orchard using Growers, I can actually back off on the insecticide, because for some reason, I get a much better action in the field.

"Since I started using Growers in 1996, I have not had a field failure. I am completely sold on the Growers product. It's a three tier program or package. You have to have Growers, high calcium lime and the subsoiling all together.

"At my first Growers meeting, Growers wasn't trying to sell their product. They said to put the lime on first and then come back and talk to us. I appreciated that. I try to deal with honesty, and you guys deal with honesty.

"The fewer chemicals I use is a bonus to me, my customers, and the land. I am only a steward of the land. God owns it. He's letting me



Pete Beccari and Mac Carter
in Pumpkin Patch

borrow it, and I have to take care of it. The soil is a living thing. It lives and it breathes and it is where your money is. If you don't take care of your soil, it won't take care of you. Look at the dust bowls and China's Gobi Desert.

"GMS and the Growers Program are true quality, and they work! That's the key." ■

Desertification

(From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

Currently, the Gobi desert is expanding at an alarming rate, in a process known as desertification. The expansion is particularly rapid on the southern edge into China, which has seen 3,600 km² (1,390 sq. mi.) of grassland overtaken every year by the Gobi Desert. This loss of farmland has caused an estimated \$50 billion in losses each year for China's economy. Dust storms, which were once a rarity, are springing up all over China, and could cause even further damage to China's agriculture economy.

The expansion of the Gobi is attributed mostly to human activities, notably deforestation, overgrazing, overconsumption of water resources, and global warming. China has made various plans to try to slow the expansion of the desert, which have met with some small degree of success, but usually have no major impact. The most recent plan involves the planting of the Green Wall of China, a huge ring of newly-planted forests that the Chinese government hopes will act as a buffer against further expansion.

On The Road Again

LATE FALL — 2008

Growers Mineral Solutions is scheduled to set up and staff booths at the following upcoming farm shows and conventions this winter. It's a great time to stop in and review your plant food and animal nutrition needs, hear about new developments at Growers or just chat with the folks who make it all happen—your friends and neighbors.

2009

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|------------|---|
| Jan. 6-8 | Delaware Ag Week
Harrington, DE |
| Jan. 6-8 | Keystone Farm Show
York, PA |
| Jan. 6-8 | Ontario Landscape Congress
Toronto, Ontario, Canada |
| Jan. 9-10 | Georgia Fruit & Vegetable
Savannah, GA |
| Jan. 13-14 | Ohio Produce
Growers Congress
Sandusky, OH |
| Jan. 13-15 | Fort Wayne Farm Show
Fort Wayne, IN |
| Jan. 13-15 | New Jersey Vegetable
Marketing
Atlantic City, NJ |
| Jan. 20-22 | Virginia Farm Show
Fishersville, VA |
| Feb. 3-5 | Mid Atlantic Fruit
& Vegetable
Hershey, PA |
| Feb. 3-5 | Canadian International
Farm Show
Toronto, Ont, Canada |
| Feb. 4-6 | Southern Farm Show
Raleigh, NC |
| Feb. 6 | Northern Indiana
Grazing Conference
Shipshewana, IN |
| Feb. 10-11 | Alexandria Area Ag Show
Alexandria, MN |
| Feb. 11-12 | Empire State Fruit
& Veg. Expo
Rochester, NY |
| Feb. 11-14 | National Farm
Machinery Show
Louisville, KY |
| Feb. 24-26 | Central Minnesota Farm Show
St. Cloud, MN |
| Feb. 26-28 | NYS Farm Show
Syracuse, NY |

Hope To See You!

South Carolina Corn Comparison Plots

By Boyd Lloyd

It was a cool morning in early March, 2008 when I drove up to the headquarters of R&K Farms located in the small Sumter County community of Oswego, in eastern South Carolina. R&K Farms is owned and operated by Richard Wheeler and gets its name from Richard and his son Kenton.

Richard and his Farm Manager, John Brown, listened intently as I introduced the Growers Program to them and explained its advantages compared to using the more expensive dry fertilizers. They asked questions and were very interested in the Growers Program, Growers Mineral Solutions, Growers Nutritional Additive and the costs per acre. Later they spent much time reading the literature I had left with them, went to the Growers web site for even more information, spent the next week or so doing extensive research and then had the better part of an hour's phone conversation with Growers R & D Director, Jim Halbeisen.

A few days later I called Richard to see if they'd had a chance to read the material and what he thought about trying GMS. He told me what had transpired since my visit and that he found all that I'd told him about Growers seemed to be true. After several days I visited Richard again and gave him a gallon sample of GMS and showed him a gallon of the Nutritional Additive. He asked if there were any farmers in the area who had used GMS and the Growers Program he could talk to. I gave him two names and phone numbers, which he later called.

Later in March Richard called to place an order for GMS and said he wanted to try it on his corn crop exclusively this year.

When an agricultural university's representatives came by to visit R&K Farms and were told about GMS and their intentions to use it exclusively on the corn crop, they told Richard he could not possibly grow a good crop of corn with that quantity of GMS per acre and the Nutritional Additive recommended. Richard told them he would see.

The county agent heard about this and requested Richard do a plot test, pitting GMS against the dry fertilizer recommended by the ag university. Richard agreed, reluctantly, knowing the test would cause him extra expense to purchase the dry fertilizer and have it spread. The county agent did a random drawing of straws to select the test plots for the GMS and dry fertilizer. A non-irrigated field was selected and, to assure an accurate test, the same seed variety was used over the entire field.

The test plots were done in increments of 24 rows because the dry fertilizer spreader truck covered that in one pass. Since the test plots were randomly selected, on occasion there were single 24 row plots alternating with each fertilizer, and others there were two 24 row (48 rows) plots of one fertilizer side by side. Both Richard and John took extreme measures to assure the test was done accurately and fairly so the test would show them, R&K Farms, accurate results. John even rode in the spreader truck

with the driver, flagged the various plots for each fertilizer and mapped the field to make sure it was all done properly.

The quantity of dry fertilizer used, as recommended by the county agent after reviewing the soil samples for that field, amounted to no nitrogen, 60 lbs./acre of phosphorous and 30 lbs./acre of potash spread over the dry fertilizer plots prior to planting.

Growers recommended using 4 gal. of GMS/acre in the soil in a 2x2 placement (2" down and 2" to the side) at the time of planting which is common in Southern (light, sandy) soils. That would be followed later with a foliar feeding of 4 gal/acre of GMS including 8 ounces/acre of Growers Nutritional Additive. Since Richard uses a tractor mounted sprayer and to prevent damaging the stalks during spraying, the foliar spraying was done when the corn was around 3 feet tall.

The entire 10 or 12 acre field was planted close to mid April, with a plant population of 24,500 using the "strip till" method. Around mid May, 90 units/lbs./acre of liquid nitrogen was knifed in over all the plots. No other fertilization was used.

Early in the crop season, there was a period when the weather was wet and cool, that was followed by normal weather for this area, and then later in the season it was drier than normal with a period of 7 to 9 days of temperatures near 100 degrees.

Harvest took place during a sudden opportune weather window and no representatives from the ag university or Growers were present. Regardless, the test was conducted accurately and properly by R&K Farms and great care was taken to keep the GMS and dry fertilizer corn plot yields completely separate. The plots grown with the GMS recommendations yielded around 110 bu./acre while the dry fertilizer plots yielded between 104-105 bu./acre, an average of 5-6 bu./acre more using Growers Mineral Solutions.

No high calcium lime was spread on any of Richard's farm land this crop season since it was too late to have it spread before planting time, however, Richard agrees with the high calcium lime concept and plans to use it in the upcoming year. Having used no calcium lime this year was a factor in Growers advising the use of 8 gal./acre of GMS. Less GMS and nitrogen can be recommended when the soil calcium level is higher. For this reason, the costs per acre were close to the same for both GMS and the dry fertilizer test plots. Another time, with adequate calcium, the GMS costs would be lower.

On another note, this year R&K Farms used Growers Mineral Solutions with Growers Nutritional Additive exclusively on his irrigated farm land along with approximately 180 units/lbs./acre of liquid nitrogen knifed into the soil, as in the test plots. The plant population was 30,000 and the yields ranged anywhere from 150 to 200 bu./acre, averaging overall 185 bu./acre. Needless to say, Richard was pleased with the results of using GMS and its application process. Think what his yields would be with improved calcium levels in the soil! ■

Growers MINERAL SOLUTIONS

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LATE FALL 2008

Reducing Feed Costs

By Jennie Henry

The Leaderbrand family farm near New York Mills, in midwestern Minnesota, is finding ways to reduce costs of raising their livestock. Along the way, they are becoming more self sufficient by raising more of their own proteins and nitrogens.

Wayne, his wife Kelly, son Ryan, brother Jay and father Roger are all part of the farm operation.

About their edible field pea crop which produced about 70 bushels of peas per acre this fall, Wayne commented, "This field is really poor, sandy, light ground. We are trying to get away from using commercial fertilizers and the field peas are responding really well here. This

is our second year planting the edible peas. Our plan is to go from peas the first year, oats underseeded with clover the next, and the following year let the clover grow, get one cutting, plow under the clover and plant corn.

"These fields are away from our home farm, so they don't receive any manure, but the organic matter is up to 5%. The peas are drilled, and we do use Growers and lime. We didn't have time to foliar spray the peas this year, and, besides, it got too wet, but we do plan to foliar spray next year.

"We grind the edible peas and feed them to the hogs raw. We substitute peas for some of the soybean meal. They say it makes good dairy feed, also. The peas are 23 to 24% protein.

"Soybeans up in this area usually yield around 25 bushels per acre on the dryland, but the peas are easier to grow on stony ground. We



Kelly, Ryan and Wayne Leaderbrand of New York Mills, Minnesota, are shown with their 70 bu/ac edible field pea crop.

combine the peas and soybeans about the same time. The peas start to mature their pods from the top on down; just the opposite of soybeans.

"We are trying to be more self sufficient, and it's really nice to be able to come back with all these crops and not need to add nitrogen." ■

Happy Holidays

The Growers Office will not be open December 25-26, 2008 and January 1-2, 2009.

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email to: growers@hmcldt.net
or visit our Web site: www.growersmineral.com

Solution Review

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How Much Potash?

In the United States in 1960 farmers used 389,000 tons of 0-0-60 on 327,416,440 croppable acres, while in 1993 United States farmers used 5,400,000 tons of 0-0-60 on 322,939,840 croppable acres. *Farm Chemicals*, May, 1995

2009 Buying—Supply Risk

Almost 70% of those responding to the poll said they had bought no fertilizer for 2009. *Weekly Fertilizer Review*, November 7, 2008

Don't depend on a readily available supply come spring. Putting off most or all fertilizer applications until spring does carry risk, but it is widely accepted by most farmers. With retailers unable to afford financing large inventories—there is no assurance that enough

product will be available when demand is high. If producers do not place an order and price the product well in advance, it may not be available when they need it. *Agriculture Online*, October 10, 2008.

Farmers should be most concerned about getting fertilizer deliveries on time for the crop year. There is a definite risk to the grower, with more than 50% of our fertilizer inputs being produced overseas. There is a long supply chain. It can take 45 to 60 days to get it here. Talk to dealers early. *Farm Journal*, November, 2008. ■

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www.growersmineral.com