

Soil Sampling: What are the Benefits?

From the desk of Ben Tipton

Over the past few years, we have all watched commodity prices fall and wondered where the bottom is. While harvesting the crops producers have worked to protect and nurture all summer, they should analyze their 2016 crop inputs. Producers need to decide how they can cut costs and still be able to grow the same or better crop next year. Producers can't control the market; they can control input costs.

Referring back to "Soil Fertility 101" (September article 2016) we read that 180-bushel corn followed by 60-bushel beans will remove 115 lbs. of phosphorus and 135 lbs. of potash in two years. With that information to guide us, wouldn't it be great to know EXACTLY what each field needs? Do we need to balance our pH? Do we need to build micronutrients? What about macronutrients? One of the smartest decisions producers can make this year is to soil sample. Soil sampling provides a great opportunity to make sound fertilizer recommendations. Soil analysis will show producers exactly how much, and where, each field's needs are.

There are many different styles of sampling that can be done at varying depths. The most effective is sampling on a grid, which gives your scout or agronomist a fine-tuned analysis of what each field needs. It can also help you save money. Instead of applying your typical "flat rate" amount of N-P-K every year, try VRT (Variable Rate Technology) and place the proper amount in the right spots. Every field is like a finger print – no two fields are exactly the same, and actually, no two parts of a field are the same.

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Seasonally or
by Appointment
8 a.m. - Noon

Another low cost option is a composite sample. A composite sample consists of 8-20 samples per field, mixed together and tested. This gives a broad idea of what your field needs, and is more accurate than doing a flat rate across the entire farm. Most farms have varying soil structures. Pulling composite samples on different soil types can help you understand which nutrients your crops are using versus what they are leaving behind.

When sampling, there are a multitude of different depths at which you can sample. Different depths will provide you with different answers to fertility questions. Shallow 0-12 inch samples will provide you with standard N-P-K data. A secondary sample of 12-24 inches can help you learn more about micronutrients as well as

macronutrients that need to be “mined” out of the soil bank from previous growing seasons.

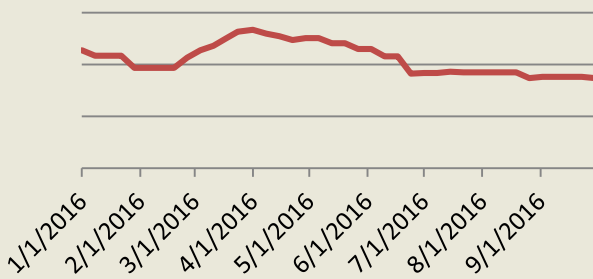
The best time to sample is late fall to early spring. During this time, most of your nutrients are “frozen” or “locked” into the soil bank. Little to no leaching occurs during the winter months, so this is the optimal time to calculate your individual fields’ needs – ahead of your anticipated 2017 crops.

Give us a call at Wickman Chemical. We can help you with any questions you may have, and guide you in the right direction.

Good luck and happy harvesting!

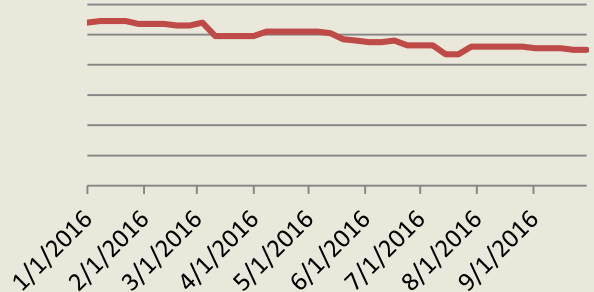
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Anh. Ammonia



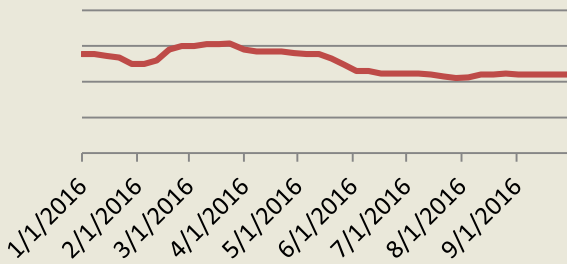
Anhydrous Ammonia is at or near its “summer low” price. Cover your fall needs before application begins.

AMS



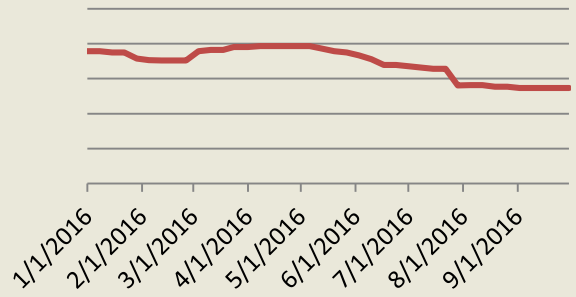
Granular Ammonium Sulfate is at its seasonal low and is a bargain. If you have storage or can forward contract your spring needs based on today’s price, cover your needs.

Urea



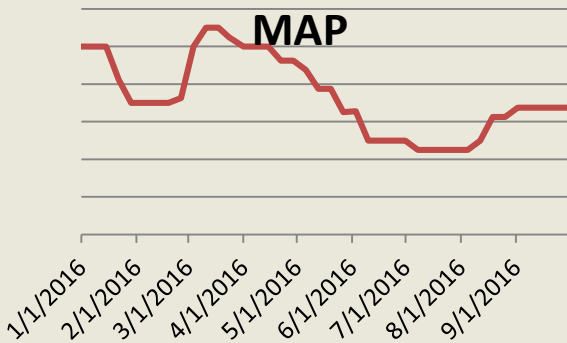
Granular Urea prices are unchanged and at their seasonal lows. If you have storage or can forward contract based on today's price, do so.

UAN



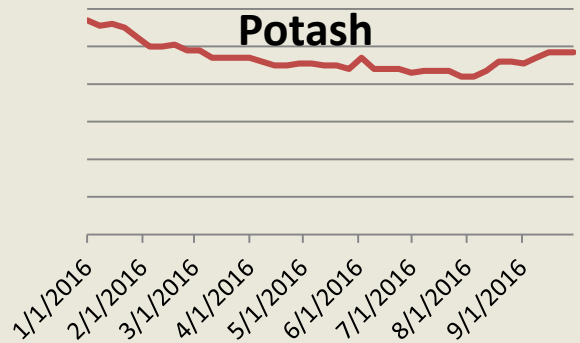
UAN markets are steady. If you have storage and can take product now, cover your needs.

MAP



MAP and DAP demand is slack with prices slightly higher than July summer fill. If you intend to spread MAP and DAP in the next 60 days, buy it now. MAP and DAP prices could retreat back to their summer lows if bad fall weather delays harvest and fall applications of dry fertilizer, but that is a fairly low probability...

Potash



Potash continues to hover just slightly above its summer fill lows. Potash prices today are still a bargain. Cover your 2017 needs before application begins this fall.