

Consider Cover Crops

From the desk of Jess Maddox

As the 2016 harvest winds down, most farmers' and ranchers' thoughts turn from what they did right or wrong in 2016 to what they can do better in 2017. If you are out of fresh ideas for 2017, perhaps you should consider cover crops.

Cover crops provide a litany of benefits and generally have an "out of pocket" cost of \$20 or less per acre. There are three main types of cover crops:

- Brassicas
- Legumes
- Cereal Grains

All three types provide the following benefits:

- Erosion control
- Increased organic matter
- Improved soil structure
- Increased or improved levels of soil nutrients
- Weed suppression
- Grazing and forage opportunities

Brassicas used are generally turnips or tillage radishes. Brassicas are easy to plant and grow rapidly with fairly low precipitation rates. Turnips and radishes also provide excellent grazing opportunities and do an incredible job of breaking up compacted soils. Brassicas are scavengers that reach down deep into the soil pulling lost nutrients up to the surface. An unexpected benefit of brassicas is their natural toxicity to soil-born pathogens like nematodes and fungi.

"I plant cover crops to build up my organic matter on fields that will be planted to a cash crop next spring. I also run a number of cattle and need some grazing ground. My cover crop of choice is a mixture of several different forage grasses and okra. I only graze down to 50%, leaving enough residue to build up my organic matter. I am amazed by the weed suppression that I have. Next year I will be doing more cover crops, especially on my poorer soils, to see if I can bring them back to where they need to be."

Lane Bruce, Milan, KS.

In this Issue

- Consider Cover Crops
- Fertilizer Trends and Recommendations

Contact Us

Wickmanchemical.com

Iowa

wickchem@metc.net

53597 650th Street
PO Box 385
Atlantic, IA 50022
712-243-7739

Kansas

wickchem@metc.net

312 W Main Street
PO Box 909
Oxford, KS 67119
408-560-2802

Monday – Friday
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Saturday
Seasonally or
by Appointment
8 a.m. - Noon

Legumes include clovers, vetch, peas and beans. Legumes can provide excellent haying and grazing opportunities, good ground cover and can help prevent soil loss. Legumes also provide nitrogen that can be used by subsequent crops.

Cereal grains include wheat, rye grain, barley and triticale. Cereal grains have soil holding root systems, suppress weeds and are good winter grazing or spring forage crops. Cereal grains are the best cover crop for nitrate retention. Nitrate retention is especially important to confinement livestock operations with manure management plans.

“I plant rye grain on corn stubble rotating to soybeans and a combination of oats and crimson clover on soybean stubble rotating to corn. The benefits of cover crops on my farms include:

- *Enhanced decomposition of crop residue*
- *Improved seed beds*
- *Nitrogen fixation*
- *Excellent erosion control*
- *Winter annual suppression*

I have been able to drop 2,4-D out of my spring burn down because the rye choked out the broadleaves. Make sure you burn down the rye when it is 6” to 8” tall; otherwise you’re going to have a hard time killing it.”

Glen Smith, Atlantic, IA

Cover crop mixtures may be beneficial in certain situations. Turnips and rye grain work well together to help provide forage opportunities and a “forgiving” seed bed in the spring. Pairing rye with hairy vetch offsets rye’s tendency to retain nitrates with hairy vetch’s ability to provide nitrogen.

“With our poor, sandy soils I need to plant a cover crop or the Kansas wind will blow my soil profile away. Erosion can be bad on a field that has had soybeans planted. My choice of cover crops is rye and wheat; they give me good erosion control and increase organic matter. I retain soil moisture when I terminate it in early spring. I also feed cattle and calves and it’s amazing how well they do on the rye. One tip: the earlier you can get your cover crop planted after fall harvest, the better. Some farmers use a drill to plant. I like to vertical till my acres in order to cut back on costs. I hook up an old fertilizer box behind my vertical tool and run the hoses up in front so it broadcast the seed ahead of the tiller. I get my seed planted and incorporated and still get my field tilled. One trip across the field and I am done!”

Macklin Nusz, Pratt, KS.

Some key points to consider when planting cover crops are:

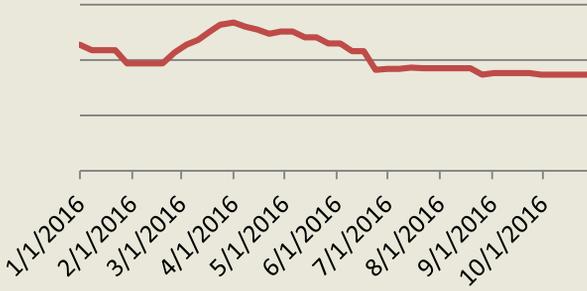
- Start clean – tillage or a burn down will be necessary in weedy fields
- Timing – plant cover crops early enough to get established and be effective
- Rotational restrictions – review the chemical labels of herbicides used on prior crops for rotational restrictions.

Planning ahead is essential!

Fertilizer Trends and Recommendations

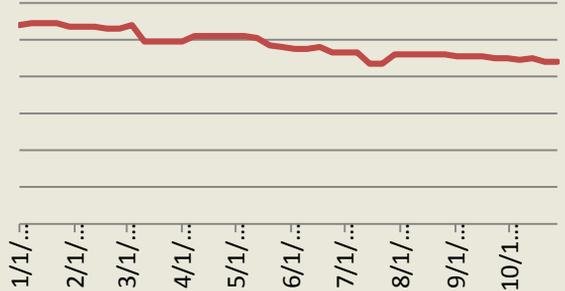
01/01/2016 – 10/31/2016

Anh. Ammonia



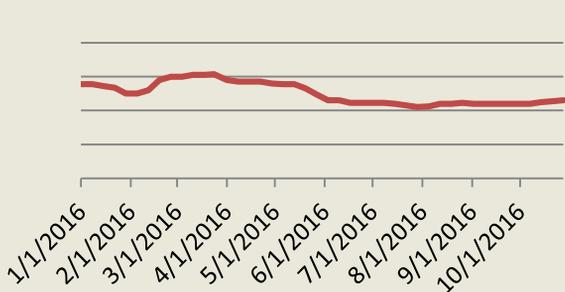
Anhydrous ammonia prices remain steady due to slack demand caused by harvest delays and warm weather. This is the lull before the storm; sooner or later application will begin, demand will pick up and so will the price.

AMS



Granular AMS has fallen \$10 since the first of October. This may be the seasonal low for AMS. If you need it and can store it, buy it!

Urea

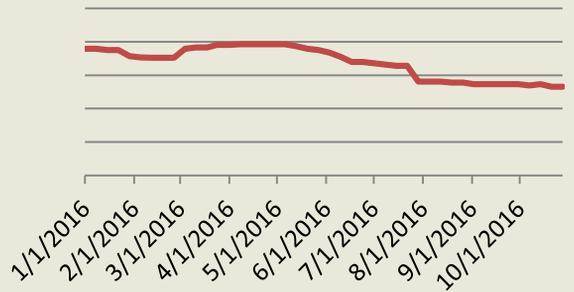


UREA prices have firmed, going up \$5 since October 1. Here is a direct quote from the Fertilizer Dealer Report:

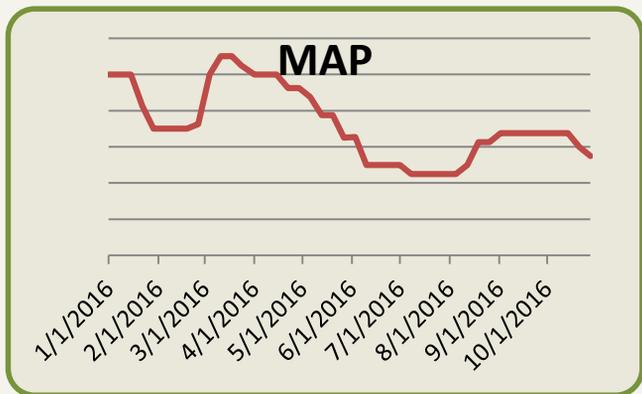
“The regional terminal market should be higher based on current NOLA barge values.”

We have stated that urea is at or near its seasonal lows. This uptick in pricing may indicate a market turnaround.

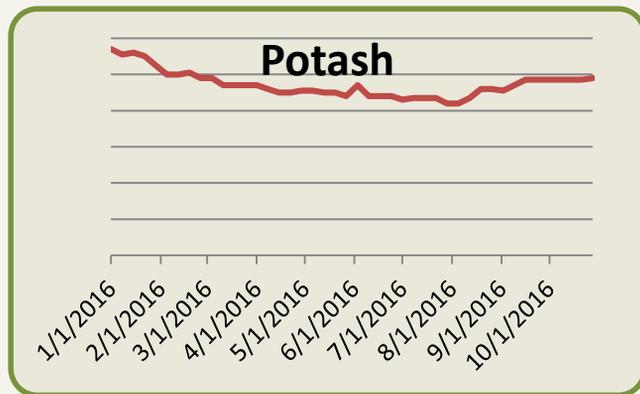
UAN



UAN prices are steady at the seasonal low end of their range. This is a good time to cover your 2017 needs if you have storage.



DAP and MAP prices have slipped \$5 to \$10 since the first of October. We are beginning to see some seasonal movement due to declining harvest activity, warm weather and ideal spreading conditions. If you want to spread MAP or DAP this fall, cover your needs now.



The potash market is steady to \$5 higher since last report. We are beginning to see seasonal demand pick up. Cover your fall potash needs now.