Cereal Economics Improves By Irrigation Practices

The situation

Winter cereal and irrigation workshops in the Magic Valley have stressed the importance of last irrigation of cereals and the detrimental effect that late irrigation has on yield, quality, the environment and the economics involved with a crop that in most cases is break-even. A major concern in the Horse Fossil Beds National Monument at Hagerman is the effect over-watering in the Bell Rapids project may have on creating landslides in the monument.

Our response

Since 1988, Robert Vodraska, Extension Agricultural Agent in Twin Falls county has been conducting summer field training sessions at Bell Rapids in cooperation which the Bell Rapid Irrigation District managers. The session have been well attended by growers (usually 25 as well as the irrigation district manager).

In Minidoka and Cassia counties Ivan Hopkins, extension agricultural agent, has been conducting similar workshops for growers receiving water from Burley and Minidoka Irrigation Districts, the A & B Irrigation District and many private wells. These growers have been experiencing increasing irrigation costs, availability of water and declining water levels in their wells. In 1993, we experienced 12 - 15 calls a day from mid June to mid July from growers and consultants requesting assistance in determining stage of growth of cereal (soft dough) and determining the last irrigation for their cereal.

Achievements

In Twin Falls county, practices adopted by producers have produced yield increases from 4 - 7 bushels ($15 - $25 per acre) along with improved test weight and less incidence of disease. The greater savings has been the irrigation cost increasing profits from $30 - $65.00 per acre from the two less irrigations applied to cereals.

Estimated acres of wheat and barley directly consulted in the Mini-Cassia area in 1993 were 32,000 acres. Average annual return to growers was $416,000 from irrigation savings. Growers using extension service last irrigation recommendations were able to harvest more timely in 1993, a year that caused problems with an abnormal growing season.

For more information

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