

What do I do with My Early Planted Grain Sorghum Crop?

By Roger Don Gribble
NW Area Agronomist

As producers look at their early planted (April) grain sorghum crop, they are faced with a dilemma. Does a producer terminate the crop now and harvest or leave the crop and harvest later in the year with the hope that he can add to the yield already in the field?

In answering this question a producer must ask himself the question of why early grain sorghum? 95% of the producers will answer this question with the thought that the sorghum crop was planted for rotational purposes and plans were to plant wheat in the fall of 2009. If that was the answer to the question, I answer with what are you waiting for? Terminate the crop, harvest in 10 days to 2 weeks and plant wheat behind the harvested grain sorghum crop. The other 5% of you are looking at early grain sorghum followed by grain sorghum, soybeans, corn, cotton or sesame in the spring of 2010.

On September 1, 2009 that was my answer and still is today, however, my answer has gotten clouded on September 29, 2009. The question today is can my 60 bushel per acre early grain sorghum crop that is out there make 20 to 30 bushel more if I wait until a freeze and harvest a better grain sorghum crop later this fall. Given my fall planted wheat crop, estimated yield of 40 bushels per acre is worth potentially \$4.00 per bushel or \$160 per acre. Can my 60 bushel sorghum crop added by 30 bushels per acre more grain

sorghum at \$1.79 per bushel totaling 90 bushels make \$161 per acre later this fall?

I should let this go at this point, but I can't. Most who set goals and objectives would like to see plans thought to fruition! Your goal for early sorghum was to harvest the crop and then back to wheat. This goal is still obtainable and would encourage you to follow the plan. My biggest concerns with the calculation above are can you get that extra 30 bushels per acre from your grain sorghum. The early planted grain sorghum has gone through tremendous stresses. You would have to know your hybrid very well to know if you have "staygreen" in your hybrid. I have already seen Charcoal Rot in grain sorghum and suspect most hybrids to have some problems standing to the November harvest after a freeze. Will the hunger birds from Kansas come down and cause problems with the standing grain sorghum crop? Will an early freeze limit grain yields of the sorghum you are hoping to get?

Grain sorghum harvest aids might be needed to terminate the growing crop. These products are needed because grain sorghum is a perennial plant that can live beyond a single season if we don't have freezing weather conditions. Growers commonly use harvest aids in grain sorghum production because of 1) poor initial emergence, 2) uneven head emergence, 3) Delay in maturity, 4) soil textural changes causing differing moisture levels in the soil, 5) Development of late emerging tillers (sucker heads), 6) weeds not controlled during the growing season and may interfere with the threshing process.

Harvest aids do run the risk of reducing both yields and test weights if improperly timed. The grain must reach physiological maturity in order to maintain proper weight. At physiological maturity, the grain has reached maximum weight and additional moisture, nutrients and carbohydrates can no longer move into the grain. At this time, a black layer forms at the point of attachment and seals the seed from the plant. It is recommended that no harvest aids be applied to grain you intend to harvest above a 30% moisture level.

Each harvest aid has its own parameters to work with. A producer should study the labels closely to determine if the product will satisfy the needs of the crop termination. Look at products such as Aim, Touchdown, glyphosate or Sodium Chlorate as good options for this operation. Be sure and follow all preharvest intervals on the labeled instructions of the product of choice.

Meet & Greet Reception

October 12

10:00-11:30am

**Woods County Extension
Office for**

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***new* Woods County
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Ag Page for Newsgram, October 14, 2009

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