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Grain Scoop: Bullish Or Bearish



By Kim Holsapple

In the world of trading commodities one is always disseminating news from the news wires to decide if it will make markets go up or down? Within the walls of companies dealing with these commodities, we call that news bullish if we think it will cause the market to rally or bearish if we think it will cause the markets to go down. In the last few weeks, there has been more news pumped into the world to cause us to watch the reaction to the markets than I can ever remember before. Remember, I have been doing this for 40 plus years so I have witnessed just about anything that could happen to the markets. Let's take a look at what is going on right now!

NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) is an agreement between the

U.S. and our friends to the north, Canada and our Southern friends, Mexico. These are two of our biggest trading partners so when tensions are high between these countries it is bearish to the market. The acreage report that was released on March 29th, showed that the acres we are going to plant to corn and beans were much smaller than we thought they would be which is bullish, as there will not be as much grain to market next year. Another report released that same day is the quarterly stocks report. This report told us what grain there was in the bins from last year's crops. There happened to be not only a little but a lot more grain in the bins from last year's crop than what was expected. Either the crop was bigger than we thought from last fall or we are not using as much, but either way this is bearish. The weather as of this writing is very wet. This should cause planting delays which would be bullish to corn because of less acres planted if it gets late enough but with those acres going to soybeans it would be bearish for beans. The Chinese tariffs on soybeans should be one of the most bearish pieces of news the market could have received. The soybean market was down as fast as a fat boy on the up side of a teeter totter. It dropped 45 cents immediately after the announcement but before the dust settled that day they only made half of the decline. The reason for the rebound was that there are only so many soybeans around the world, so if the Chinese are to take all their beans from South America then every other country will have to come to the U.S. and get their soybeans. So did things really change? Our weekly exports have both bullish and bearish news as some weeks are bigger than expected and some are smaller. Typically, this is not a major market mover on a weekly basis. Here in central Illinois the river system is very important. If water levels get too high or too low it causes a disruption in transportation which is bearish to our local market. We have seen both sides this year.

There are many, many more factors that affect us on a daily, weekly, and yearly basis. The reason we trade in the futures market is because we are always trying to take this information and try to figure out how it will affect the markets in the future. Bullish or Bearish the markets will trade!

As for me, the incubator produced 31 fluffy chicks for my 9 and one half grandkids to watch grow, into what will become a target for the foxes, owls, hawks, coons, minks, dogs, and whatever else I might have come out of the woods. The fish are biting and mushroom and turkey season is right around the corner. I just love this time of year.

Have You Done Your Safety Inspections?



Stanley Joergens

Here at South Central FS, Inc and Total Grain Marketing, LLC we have annual Safety Inspections led by our FS Insurance Representative. These inspections are very helpful in maintaining a safe facility for our employees and our customers. The inspector observes safety deficient items, such as rest plates on grinders too far from a grinder wheel that could cause the grinded item to get jammed in the grinder wheel or ground lugs missing off electric plug ends that could possibility cause the user to be shocked if the equipment malfunctioned. He also notices and documents missing EXIT and NOT AN EXIT signs on doorways to help with evacuations during emergencies. He takes pictures of these items and summarizes his findings for that facility. That document is then presented to the facility manager to correct

those items and report back after completion of compliance. These items seem like small items and most often do not create major problems but even one small deficiency could have devastating results if the right event or scenario were actually played out and some one was injured. As I walk around with the Insurance Rep. and view the items that he points out and he explains the hazards of each, I think to myself, why can't the facility manager see this if he is around this facility every day? At these facilities, the manager and employees are sometimes so used to seeing that item be a safety issue, such as an extension cord with the outer insulation cover scraped off down to the colored wire insulation cover, that they are not aware of the dangers. Because it has been that way so long, it has become a common place to them. Sometimes it takes the eyes of someone from outside that geography to recognize those "hid in plain sight" items. To help you understand what I mean, try this at your own home, shop or farm. Go around your home or farm work area and look for safety items that need corrected or fixed and write them down as if you were going to correct them. Then ask another family member or friend that does not work around your shop or farm to take a note pad and walk around your work areas and note safety deficiencies and write them down. You will be astounded at the items that you overlooked or had thought to be of no or little concern that is actually a safety item when thought through. You will soon see the benefit of a third party inspection and observation to help you make your work area at home as safe as it can be.

My brother works for a large, well-known company that has a very intense safety culture and compliance guidelines. When he comes to the farm to visit, he is constantly making common sense observations and giving comments and suggestions to improve safety or most times going ahead and making those corrections, such as putting extra lighting on dark stairways or installing motion lights in dark hazardous areas. He always has the newest and improved gadgets to detect energized power lines behind walls or to detect improper receptacle wiring. I asked him if he could just move in and stay here to keep things up to code and safe but he has his own family and job responsibilities back at his home which he needs to return to. This reminds me that I need to be responsible and implement a "Safety Culture" mindset and look at my own work areas as if I were looking through his eyes to find those things that could be a hazard to me or my family and correct them before an injury occurs.

South Central FS, Inc and Total Grain Marketing, LLC and its employees want all of our facilities, customers, and community to be safe and encourage an expanded safety culture at home and work for everyone in our communities.

Stanley Joergens

Safety and Compliance

South Central FS, Inc and Total Grain Marketing LLC

Location Spotlight

Watson Feed Mill



A ribbon cutting ceremony was held by the Effingham Chamber.

We are excited that the feed mill in Watson has officially started feed production. Servicing our customers is our primary focus, but the company will have some internal changes with the new location.

The open house on March 28th exceeded our attendance expectations with over 500 attendees. Many of our employees expressed great pleasure in showcasing the features of the facility.

Our focus has and will continue to be to serve the needs of our independent livestock producers. Some of the features about the mill are:

- The mill was constructed to meet the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) regulations.

- The new feed mill allows us to have more ingredient options to benefit our producers.

- We are a multi species mill. Many new mills are single species.

- We have been operating our current mill 24 hours a day to keep up with our producer's

current needs, the new mill will allow for greater capacity.

- Our grain and ingredient legs can be used intermittently, if needed.

- We will have two roller mills to process a different grind size.

- We have two scales. One for incoming ingredients and one for finished feeds which will maximize our truck traffic.

- The boiler that will be used in pelleting will also be used to heat the building and fat storage tank.

These features will allow us to better serve our growing customer base. The mill will have a quicker turnaround time on incoming ingredients. We have two receiving pits with a 7500 bushel per hour capacity that will be unloaded in an enclosed facility. Hopper bottoms are required to meet our dust control protocol. Loadout capacity has greatly increased over the previous mill, this will allow for delivery trucks to run efficiently and for the feed mill to have more flexibility in a production schedule.

The mixing system is rated at 60 tons per hour and it has a 4 ton batch size. We will have two roller mills



Tours were given throughout the feed mill to learn what all will go on in this facility.

to process corn and have the ability to make multiple grind sizes of corn. The mill will have the ability to pellet feed. This option will be in operation in the coming weeks.

Once the new mill is in total operation, we will discontinue manufacturing feed at the Willow Street location. Willow Street will continue to service the retail business.

We would like to thank all the customers, cooperative members, and employees who have helped make this possible.

Preparing for Test Strips or Comparisons

Hello everyone!! Since the last article spring has arrived although you may not be able to tell it by the weather patterns we are experiencing. By the time you get this article I hope we are able to be in the fields with everything running smoothly.

If you remember last time we shared with you some useful tips on helping your spring run smoother by performing a pre-season checkup on your precision equipment. Sooooo! This article is focused on useful tips for those of you who want to do test strips or comparisons in your field.

- Take time to draw out your plan on paper before heading to the field. What we think will be a nice test or comparison in our head may not look to good when put to paper.
- When doing a comparison (such as 1/2 of the field) take into consideration wet or low yielding spots which will affect your total outcome.
- If you are doing a comparison of a spray or fertilizer which can be applied in an opposite direction of planting, again consider wet or low yielding spots in your field. For example if you always have good yields on the North end of your test field then it probably is not a good idea

to compare North to South, rather make the split East to West.

- When doing strips make sure the planter will match up to the harvest machine to record useful data.
- If you want to try a planting prescription in a field and want to have a strip or two to compare with your normal flat rate population the best thing to do is to turn the prescription off and do a normal rate and then turn the prescription back on again. If you do this then it will match up to your harvest machine and you will have succeeded in having good data to compare.

These are just a few things to think about when preparing for test strips or comparisons. Our Digital Ag team recommends that you do a small comparison at first then if that works well you can expand in the future to additional fields. And as always, our Digital Ag team is here if you need assistance with the plans for tests or comparisons. Please feel free to contact us.

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Agriculture is our wisest pursuit, because it will in the end contribute most to the real wealth, good morals, and happiness.
 Thomas Jefferson.





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Nitrogen Management as a System

When it comes to corn production, nitrogen is one of the most important factors that influence grain yield at harvest. Nitrogen is dynamic since it changes forms and experiences additions and losses during the growing season. These additions and losses of nitrogen are heavily influenced by the environment (temperature and moisture). Over the years there have been growing seasons with below average corn yields that were blamed on the weather. The weather certainly caused the nitrogen loss but a significant

amount of yield could have been retained by doing a better job of managing nitrogen.

Spilt Nitrogen Applications – The ideal timing of a single application of nitrogen is largely a function of the environmental factors for that particular year. For any single application of nitrogen you can construct a weather scenario to make it look good or bad. Split applications of nitrogen have been proven to be an effective way of reducing risk for growers.

Sidedress Urea – Applying broadcast urea over the top of corn has been a widely adopted method

of applying nitrogen in season. This will be our 10th growing season of custom applying sidedress urea. Here are some of the key benefits:

- Custom Application – growers do not need to invest in time or equipment.
- Flexibility in application rates.
- Large application window.
- Delay a portion of nitrogen to the mid-vegetation stage – high demand.
- Even distribution of nitrogen that is rapidly taken up by the corn crop.

Sulfur: Essential Plant Nutrient

Sulfur is a plant-essential element, often classified as a ‘secondary’ nutrient because it is needed in lesser quantities than primary nutrients. Sulfur functions in a wide array of physiological processes, including growth and development of cells, photosynthesis, carbon and nitrogen metabolism, and protein synthesis.

Higher crop yield trends, fewer sulfur fertilizer applications, and lower atmospheric sulfur deposition rates have all contributed to a growing occurrence of sulfur deficiency in cropping systems in the Midwestern U.S. The 1990 United States Clean Air Act did much to control air pollution and acid rain, but it also reduced the amount of sulfur deposits in agricultural fields. Before 1990 we received approximately 40-50 lbs/year of sulfur from acid rain. We now only receive about 7 lbs/year of sulfur, leaving a need for sulfur fertilization. A 200-bushel corn crop would remove about 16 lbs of S per acre in harvested grain. By comparison, a 60-bushel soybean crop would remove about 7 lbs of S per acre in harvested grain. Sulfur needs in a high yield corn-soy rotation would be 20-25 lbs S per acre grain removal and about 35 lbs S per acre total need. Similar to nitrate, sulfate anions are repelled by the negatively charged cation exchange sites in the soil and are subject to leaching losses, so it is unlikely to buildup our soil S levels.

Sulfur deficiencies are usually variable within a field and may be associated with areas of sandy texture, low organic matter, and hill tops or side-slopes where organic matter may be depleted due to erosion.

Sulfur deficiency symptoms resemble nitrogen deficiency by displaying a yellowish appearance to the foliage and interveinal chlorosis.

Several different forms of sulfur fertilizer are suitable for use in field crops. These fertilizers can be divided into two classes: those containing elemental sulfur and those containing sulfate. Elemental S is not immediately plant-available and must be biologically oxidized to sulfate. This transformation takes time and is best facilitated by

adequate moisture, aeration, and warm temperatures. Oxidation rates are highest at temperatures in excess of 85 degrees F in the late spring and early summer, conveniently coinciding with plant need. Applications of elemental sulfur blended into dry fertilizer applications in the fall are economical and provide adequate time and exposure for sulfur to gradually be made available. Elemental sulfur increases soil acidity, necessitating careful monitoring of soil pH. Sulfate sulfur fertilizers should be timed as close as possible to match the sulfur need of the growing crop because they are readily available for plant uptake and subject to losses. There have been many advancements in sulfate sulfur fertilizers in recent years. Two common ways to add sulfates include: blending dry ammonium sulfate (AMS) with urea pre-plant incorporated or at topdress time, or blending liquid ammonium thiosulfate (ATS) with urea-ammonium nitrate (UAN) pre-plant incorporated or side dress. Other dry fertilizer products containing sulfate sulfur include MESZ, Sulf-N and Amidis. In-furrow sulfur applications are restricted to a few pounds due to the cumulative risks of ammonium and salt index, which may damage seedlings. Sulfates can be added in adequate quantities to starters in 2x2 placements, which provide physical separation from the germinating seed.

Studies from 2017 saw a positive yield response to sulfur additions 85% of the time. The average yield increase was 6.8 bu/ac. It’s not too late to consider the addition of sulfur for your 2018 corn crop. Consider the need for sulfur fertilizer especially in soils with low organic matter and/or sandy texture. Apply about 20-25 lbs of sulfur per acre to meet crop need in deficient environments. Sulfate fertilizers must be used pre-plant or side-dress to be available for the current year’s crop. Only apply elemental sulfur with dry fertilizer in the fall to allow adequate time for sulfur to oxidize to sulfate and become plant-available. Be sure to talk with your crop specialist about which sulfate fertilizer fits best with your current crop plan.

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