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UNL Extension Offers Resources for High Inputs in Crop Production

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LINCOLN, Neb. & With input costs for the 2009 crop production season projected to be two to three times higher than in recent years, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension has resources to help.

UNL's Surviving High Input Costs in Crop Production (**http://cropwatch.unl.edu/survivinghighinputcosts.htm**) Web page offers Nebraska crop producers timely information to curb increasing costs and improve profit margins.

Input costs, such as fuel, fertilizer, seed and land all have influenced crop production costs, said Tom Dorn, UNL Extension educator in Lancaster County.

"In the last five years, the cost of off-road diesel fuel has shot up from $1.30 to $3.50 per gallon, a cost increase of 269 percent," Dorn said. "The fuel cost to run a moderately sized, 130 horsepower, tractor has increased from $7.41 to $19.95 per hour. The fuel cost to operate a 220 horsepower combine has gone up from $8.73 to $33.95 per hour in the same time period."

Total listed costs for field operations and purchased materials are estimated at $336 per acre for dryland corn in west central Nebraska with 100 bushel per acre anticipated yield a break even of $3.36 per bushel, and $562 per acre for center pivot irrigated corn following soybeans with a yield of 205 bushels per acre a break even of $2.96 per bushel, Dorn said.

The UNL Extension initiative targets corn, soybean, sorghum, dry bean, wheat, millet, oat and sunflower producers.

Dorn and Gary Hergert, UNL nutrient management and soil quality specialist, lead the team. UNL Extension specialists and educators related to crop production will post recommendations that will help producers take measures to reduce input costs. These will start to go online this week. The site will continuously be updated, so check back often.

"This series of timely tips can help producers improve profitability in times of rapidly increasing costs and uncertain crop prices," Hergert said. "It really is in keeping with Extension's slogan of Know How. Know Now."

Topics include: Eliminate One Field Operation Such as Shredding Stalks; No-till Farming in Dryalnd Cropping Systems; Switching to No-till can Save Irrigation Water; Credit Soil for Nitrate Nitrogen; Credit Soil Organic Matter for Nitrogen; Eliminate Unnecessary Use of Phosphorus, Potassium and Sulfur Fertilizer; Taking Advantage of Manure Resources; Giving Proper Nitrogen Credit for Legumes in Corn and Milo Rotations; Corn/Soybean Rotation vs. Continuous Corn; Eliminate Use of Inoculant on Soybeans Where Soil has a History of Beans; Setting Realistic Yield Goals; Skip-Row Corn for Improved Drought Tolerance in Rain fed Corn; Generic Products Versus Name Brand Products; Eliminate Routine Treatment of Wireworm;

Managing Foliar Diseases of Winter Wheat with Fungicides Treatment Criteria, Profitability and Products; Selecting Resistance in Soybean Varieties to Combat Soybean Diseases; Leasing or Sharing Machinery; Improve Efficience of Irrigation Pumping Plants; Repair Leaky Gates/Gaskets and Eliminate a Set; Using Cutoff Ratio to Fine Tune Furrow Irrgations; Harvest Soybeans at 13 Percent Moisture; Using On-Farm Research to Evaluate Profitability and Fill Drying Bins in Layers to Reduce Drying Time and Energy Cost.

In addition, these topics will be discussed at UNL Extension crop meetings in the next few months across Nebraska.

Topics also will be featured on future episodes of UNL's "Market Journal" program.

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