

Micronutrients: *Maximizing Yields*

Many factors influence a grower's willingness to invest in micronutrients, but the days when these products are viewed as optional are quickly going by the wayside.

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WITH the rainy start to the 2013 growing season basically a complete polar opposite of the moisture-challenged conditions producers faced last season, this summer has helped reveal to many growers the importance of micronutrient products to yield.

"This year's trying spring weather showed the benefits of early nutrient availability and getting the crop off to a good start," says Kerry Green, managing director, Wolf Trax. "Producers are seeing the importance of a balanced nutrition program as genetics push yields and nutrient demand higher, and the limiting factor on many high-producing varieties is often not a macronutrient, but a micronutrient. Areas that may have had borderline nutrient deficiency are now requiring additional nutrients to meet maximum production targets."

The Mosaic Co. has also witnessed increased grower awareness of micronutrient benefits, according to Dr. Kyle Freeman, manager of new product development. "We've definitely seen an increase in

both awareness and adoption of micro nutrients among growers looking to support high-yield systems over the past several years. Micronutrients act to support the primary crop nutrients — nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium — for instance, we know that zinc improves phosphorus uptake, so the importance of incorporating micronutrients as part of a balanced fertility program is becoming more important."

However, Jerry Stoller, President, Stoller Enterprises, Inc., saw some initial pushback from the market in the form of growers that had a hard time getting into fields at planting time due to the wet spring.

"This planting season was very rushed, and some farmers did not want to take the time and make the effort to add micronutrients to the starter fertilizer and in so doing, the rate of soil-applied micronutrients was again lower than expectations," says Stoller. "However, the recovery of corn growth and continued favorable weather allowed farmers to come back and foliar apply micronutrients in order to achieve higher potential yields."

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