



This spring, many areas received an abnormally late snowfall after many farmers had already begun planting.

Dealing With Mother Nature's Unpredictability

What producers can do to fight back

Mother Nature hasn't been very friendly to those of us in the agricultural community in recent months. In 2012, a late frost followed by the drought made things interesting. In 2013, for many areas across the U.S., plenty of April showers turned into May gully washers and even snowfall, which is still causing planting delays. With weather conditions changing from day to day, it has been difficult for farmers to complete spring planting.

Know the yield impact

While crops such as corn have probably made it into the ground in many areas, uncooperative, wet weather after planting has led to increased concern about yield impact and even survival rates for young plants. According to the USDA Crop Progress Report for the week of June 17, 75% of corn had emerged, significantly behind the five-year average of 96%. Just 64% of the crop is rated good-to-excellent.

For corn seed that made it in the ground within a month or so of the typical planting dates, farmers have reason to be cautiously optimistic—if weather conditions after planting were fair. "Research in central Illinois finds that, all else equal, average corn yields are not found to be substantially different for planting dates ranging from early April to mid-May. Yields generally decline at an accelerating rate for planting dates after mid-May," said Darrel Good in an article posted on Agriculture.com.¹

Unfortunately, plenty of farmers watched as heavy rains flooded and ponded newly planted fields this year. Many experts believe that young corn can survive up to four days of ponding if temperatures are relatively cool (mid-60s F or cooler), or fewer days if temperatures are warm (mid-70s F or warmer).² And even if water recedes and the soil dries quickly, the crust left behind can mean trouble for uniform emergence.

Don't rule out starter fertilizer

There is limited research on yield response to starter fertilizer in late-planted corn, but [one study](#) reported on by Iowa State University found the following: "Wisconsin research from a few years ago by Dr. Larry Bundy and collaborators demonstrated, however, that starter application was as likely to increase corn yield with early planting dates as with

late planting dates and full-season hybrids."³

The article also stated: "Research...has shown that corn growth in response to starter fertilizer is more frequent in conditions that reduce early root growth or activity."⁴

While useful in weighing your options, this information should be not taken as evidence that a starter is the right fit for your soil. It is always best to soil test before deciding on whether to add a starter fertilizer and also to determine what type and amount of starter fertilizer to use.

Carefully consider replanting

Given the potential for negative yield impact, in some cases, replanting may be the best option. It is true research tends to show later planting dates can result in an overall decreased maximum yield. But it may also be possible that the yield potential of late-planted corn would cover the yield loss of the current crop plus the costs associated with replanting.

You can also consider other crops. Although planting your planned soybean acres may be proving challenging given still-wet conditions, depending on nutrient and herbicide applications already applied, switching to a soybean crop instead of corn may be a viable option.

The decision to replant is never easy, but there are a lot of helpful resources available to growers.

- You should start with a conversation with your crop insurance agent. The Iowa State University Agronomy Extension offers a spreadsheet designed to help you [analyze options](#) with your agent.
- The Pioneer website offers a succinct summary of [factors to consider when replanting a corn crop](#) is on the table.
- Iowa State University Agronomy Extension also provides [a corn replant checklist](#).



Innovative planter attachments increase efficiency and planter performance by creating a uniform seedbed in less-than-perfect conditions.

Take advantage of modern equipment

Fortunately, modern technology makes it easier and quicker to plant, so the time associated with replanting is a more manageable downside than decades ago. More acres are being planted faster with bigger planters that are equipped with many different options. Modern innovations allow growers to get into the fields in a narrow window of time and cover a lot of ground.

Equipment that growers facing replanting may find

exceptionally valuable to get crops out of the ground faster includes the traditional [rotary hoe](#), which can be used to fluff and dry out wet soil and break up crusting. Planter row-unit attachments that multitask—with a [residue manager](#), [one-pass fertilizer coulters](#), and [cast spike closing wheel](#), for example—extend the planting window thanks to the increased efficiency they offer.

Prepared for battle

Armed with knowledge—of your soil conditions, soil nutrients, equipment options, and insurance coverage—it is possible to make it through a second challenging year for all in the agriculture industry.

Endnotes

- 1 Darrel Good, "[How much corn will be planted late?](#)" April 29, 2013, <http://www.agriculture.com/news/crops/how-much-cn-will-be-pltd-late_2-ar31203>, accessed on June 3, 2013.
- 2 Bob Nielsen, "[Effects of flooding or ponding on young corn](#)," *Ag Professional*, June 10, 2013, <<http://www.agprofessional.com/resource-centers/corn/news/Effects-of-flooding-or-ponding-on-young-corn-210618961.html>>, accessed on June 18, 2013.
- 3 Antonio P. Mallarino, "[Don't Underestimate The Value Of Starter Fertilizer For Corn Planted Late](#)," May 5, 2013. <<http://www.no-tillfarmer.com/pages/News---Dont-Underestimate-The-Value-Of-Starter-Fertilizer-For-Corn-Planted-Late.php>>, accessed on June 3, 2013.
- 4 Ibid.

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Yetter Manufacturing Co., Inc. | 109 S. McDonough | Colchester, Illinois 62326
Phone: 800-447-5777 | FAX: 309-776-3222 | www.yetterco.com | E-mail: info@yetterco.com