

WILL YOUR CROP RUN OUT OF GAS THIS YEAR?

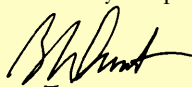
I've never understood why people let their cars run out of gas. Everybody knows a car won't run without gasoline in the tank. The gas gauge tells them when the tank is approaching empty, and there are gas stations on nearly every street corner. Maybe some like the challenge of seeing if they can go one more mile or reach the next station before the engine sputters to a stop. Maybe they just like taking risks. Whatever the reason, it doesn't make sense. Gasoline may be expensive, but a tank full is still cheaper than the cost of a tow truck.

Phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) are a lot like gasoline. Crops can't grow and produce an economic yield without them. Soil tests, as the gas gauge in a car, measure P and K levels and tell farmers when these (and other) essential plant nutrients should be applied. However, when farmers allow their soils to run low in P or K, they are risking much more than a car stalled on a roadside because of an empty gas tank. They are risking yield potential and profits...their very livelihood.

A recent North American soil test survey conducted by the Institute showed that between 40 and 50 percent of the more than 2.0 million soil samples evaluated tested medium or below in either or both P and K. Unlike the automobile, the soil's PK tank doesn't have to be empty before crop yields and farmer profits are negatively affected. Low and medium soil tests take away from potential yields and profits, and they do it every year fertility levels aren't rebuilt to an optimum level.

Where is the PK gauge registering in your fields or those of your farmer customers? Is it approaching the empty mark? Take the opportunity to find out, beginning during this growing season. Make visual observations. Look for deficiencies. Document potential problem areas by taking plant samples and having them analyzed. When crops are harvested this fall, have soils tested. Then put all the information together and come up with a plan to refill the soil's PK tank before next year's crop is planted.

Don't take the risk of allowing a crop to run out of P and K when it is so easy to refill the tank. Keep soil fertility levels high to help crops reach their yield potential.



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