

## Wheat Profitability: The Time is Right for Decisions

As the combines are rolling through the wheat fields of Oklahoma now is the time to be making the management decisions regarding fertilizer inputs. This is not the decision of whether to put on 100 or 125 lbs N with anhydrous but how to manage the fertilizer so that every pound of N or P bought and applied is used in the most efficient and economical manner. At this moment anhydrous ammonia costs approx. \$775/ton, Urea is at \$665/ton, UAN (solution 28) \$365/ton, and DAP (18-46-0) is \$1000/ton. Not only is the cost of N is high, but also P. It makes no sense to apply fertilizer without knowing any additional information. The collection of this information is the management decision that has to be made now. Are you going to collect soil samples, what fields haven't been tested recently, how many samples do you need? Basic soil test from the OSU Soil Water Forage Analytical Laboratory cost \$10 dollars. If you learn from the soil test that you can reduce the amount P you apply in a 15 acre field by 1 lb you have just paid for the soil test, with P at \$ 0.7+ a lb and N at \$0.45+ N/lb for anhydrous and \$0.7+ N/lb, the break even for a \$10 soil test is very small. Just remember that when soil sampling take at least 15 core samples from each field.

It is also time to decide whether or not you are going to be using references strips this coming wheat season. Are you going to use an N-Rich strip, a ramp calibration strip, who and how is it going to be applied, how will it be measured and by who? All of these things are better decided now than at the last moment. Having reference strips will allow you have much more information at top-dress time and you can then make a much more educated and refined decision.

Not applying any fertilizer is also not the answer, a small amount of N, P, or K can mean very big returns in terms of yield. It is very similar to driving with today's gas prices. If you are at a location where the gas is really expensive, you do not want to buy more than you need to get to your final destination or even enough to get there, but then again you don't want to leave the gas station without making sure that you have enough to get to the next station. Running out of nutrients early in season is worse than running out of gas. If you run out of gas, you walk and your pride is hurt. If your wheat runs out of nutrients you're losing yield and profits.