

AGRICULTURAL BEET

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Managing Crop Residue: even more important in a challenging fall

An “average year” is nothing more than the arithmetic mean of a series of extremes and 2019 has set some significant boundaries when it comes to excessive moisture. This moisture has taken its toll on many of our normal harvest practices and has the potential to make a substantial impact on our 2020 crop as well. The reality is that the choices we make during this difficult 2019 harvest will create significant ripples into next spring to impact our opportunity for a successful start to 2020.

Considerations for 2020 sugar beet field preparation during this difficult 2019 harvest.

- You’ve been dealt a difficult hand so set realistic expectations. Some fields may not be predisposed for perfect field setup but there may exist a few fall residue management inputs that can increase your odds for a successful beginning to your 2020 sugar beet crop.
- It’s imperative to give some consideration to your options while you can think clearly.
 - Flexibility will be crucial.
 - This requires forethought since every operation has its own tools and philosophy.
 - Conditions will change for the better or worse over time. A late harvest is reality. Understanding field conditions will not be possible until you start to harvest the field.
 - Having a plan is important. “One cannot effectively switch to plan B if they have not first established Plan A”
 - Set residue choppers/spreaders for corn & soybean to achieve uniform sizing and distribution.
 - Aggressive tillage tools may be warranted to bury trash (moldboard / disk-chisel plows).
 - However, excessively heavy disks in combination with wet fields will increase compaction.
 - Consider to follow crops that create less residue on a percentage of 2020 sugar beet acres.
 - Physical management or removal of residue (if or when applicable) prior to fall tillage.
- Although a well-prepped seedbed is your goal for all of your 2020 crops, sugar beet seedbeds are particularly important because of its small-seeded nature which ...
 - ... requires shallow seed placement that is both accurate and uniform in depth control.
 - ... requires seed furrow firming for excellent seed to soil contact with no excessive air spaces caused by an abundance of trash that can dry out and interfere with seed imbibition of water.
 - ... produces small seedlings that have difficulty with compaction.

Bottom Line: What you are able to do this fall for 2020 sugarbeet fields will impact planting next spring. Recognize what you can and cannot control with emphasis on what can be done to reduce the amount of surface residue while giving consideration to what your planter row cleaners can do for the rest.

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