

An Alternative Thought Process

In the not so distant past, I received a call from a grower asking about weed control options in his wheat crop. I say “asking” loosely; our conversation devolved into a complaining session in which both he and I lamented the difficulties of herbicide resistant weeds. His troubles stemmed from a recurring problem in his field. I provided him with a list of the latest and greatest herbicide options along with University efficacy trial data for him to further evaluate what would be best for him. He thanked me, and we went along with the rest of our respective day.

Upon further reflection, I now realize the error of my ways: he and I were both trapped in the all too common paradigm of managing for what we *don't* want.

Often, arguably too often, those of us in agriculture focus on the troubles of production, the headache of marketing, and the lunacy of politics. We focus on how to kill problematic weeds, sell crops at prices we cannot control, and avoid taxes and regulation. In doing so, it seems we are led further from our goals. I realize this is the pot calling the kettle black—I am just as guilty of this behavior as anyone. However, I think it may be time for us to rework our thoughts and to consider managing for what we want.

If you'll note, aforementioned words like, “kill”, “cannot”, and “avoid” bring a negative connotation to the following word. Yes, weeds are pesky, annoying, and generally negative. But our goal is rarely squarely focused on killing weeds, rather our goal is more likely to be growing the most profitable crop, or achieving optimal yields.

Though far easier said than done, altering the manner in which we consider seemingly problematic circumstances to get at the root (pun intended) of our concern, may shed light on an alternative which could lead to a more desirable outcome.

In this, instead of providing the grower with a list of herbicide options and lamenting the difficulties of weeds, it may have been more beneficial to explore how he could achieve greater profitability from an alternative enterprise. Herbicides can be a costly endeavor (especially this year), and may not actually help the grower achieve his ultimate goal of profitability. Potentially shifting a portion of the field into a hay crop, or a deer food-plot may be an effective option to improve the profitability of the wheat crop, along with providing an additional enterprise in which the weed control headache subsides, and profitability increases.

Much of this article is guided by information from minds far smarter than mine. Though this thought process is far from complex, addressing problems by asking, “what is it *really* that I

want?” may supply us with an empty tool-belt as our problems we need to “fix” seem to vanish by managing for what we want.

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