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Michigan Corn Production Hybrids Compared

Michigan State University Extension Service

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Michigan Corn Production

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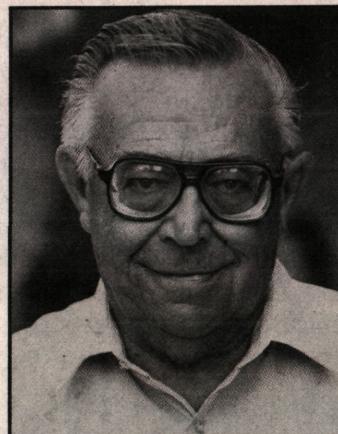
HYBRIDS COMPARED 1990

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*Died November 16, 1989. This bulletin was completed after his death.



Elmer C. Rossman, born November 17, 1919 at Rawlins, Wyoming, received his B.S. in Agronomy from Oregon State University, an M.S. in Farm Crops from Michigan State and a Ph.D. in Plant Breeding from Iowa State University. Elmer joined the staff of MSU in 1948 and remained on the faculty until his death, November 16, 1989.

From 1950-1987, Elmer participated in the annual meeting of the American Seed Trade and was a member of the NCR-2 committee, serving as chairman three times. His annual "Corn Hybrids Compared" was an annual event along with numerous reports for farm magazines, technical journals and newspapers.

He had a major role in increasing corn production in Michigan from 1,729,000 acres in 1950-54 to over 2,830,000 acres in 1982-86. Dr. Rossman released more than 30 corn inbred lines and 30

corn hybrids. His corn production research, coupled with his success as a plant breeder, were major contributions to the doubling of average corn yields in Michigan in less than two decades. His close ties with Extension and farmers resulted in a valuable and productive linkage between excellent science and applied research serving the corn producers of the state of Michigan.

Hybrid corn trials are conducted each year by the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station in cooperation with the Cooperative Extension Service, seed corn companies, and farmers.

Many different hybrids are offered for sale in Michigan. They differ in yield ability, maturity, lodging resistance, and other characteristics. Choosing the best corn hybrids is an important part of profitable corn production. By planting the best hybrids, farmers can obtain higher yields and other improvements with little or no increase in production costs. Seed of hybrids with the best performance records in Michigan generally cost no more than seed of hybrids with lower performance.

The highest yielding hybrids in the 1989 trials produced 40 bushels more per acre than the average of 373 hybrids tested (Table A) and 84 bushels more than the lowest yielding hybrids. At 19 testing locations, the yields were 177 bushels for the highest, 137 bushels for the average, and 93 bushels for the lowest yielding hybrids. The driest hybrids at harvest contained 5 percent less moisture than the average and 12 percent less moisture than the wettest hybrids tested. Stalk breakage averaged 11 percent for hybrids with the highest amount of stalk lodging, 3 percent for the average and 0.2 percent for the lowest.

Entries

All seed companies are invited to enter hybrids in the trials each year. A fee is charged to cover some of the direct expenses.

Table 25 presents an index of all hybrids entered in the 1989 trials. At the 19 locations, 373 hybrids from 47 seed companies were tested as 2,042 entries. Company names used in association with hybrid numbers refer to the brand. The number is the hybrid designation.

Methods

Scientific methods are used to conduct these trials to give all hybrids equal opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities. The best way to compare a group of corn hybrids is to grow them all in the same field with the same fertilizer, population, date of planting, etc.

Seed companies submitted seed for all entries. Equal numbers of seeds were counted for each plot of all hybrids. Each hybrid was replicated several times in the field. Plots were planted with a standard, two-row corn planter adapted for small plots.

From seed packaging through harvest and data processing, each hybrid was identified only by a code number to reduce the chance of biased results. The code was deciphered after the data had been processed.

Stands and lodging were counted before harvest. Plots were harvested mechanically for both grain and silage yields.

Silage yields were taken on all hybrids in trials of Ingham, Sanilac, Huron, Missaukee, Alpena, and Alger counties (Tables 10, 12, 15, 20, 22, and 24).

Irrigated and non-irrigated comparisons were made in the Montcalm County trial (Table 17). The trials in Hillsdale County (Table 2) and Mason County (Table 18) were irrigated. There were two lo-

cations in Cass County—upland soil with irrigation (Table 5) and muck soil (Table 6).

Damage by deer in the Alger County silage trial (Table 24) resulted in unacceptable stand losses. Table 24 was not published in 1989 nor in 1987.

Growing Conditions

All plantings were completed between April 27 and May 22. Planting was timely. Cool, wet growing conditions following planting were not conducive to rapid germination or seedling survival (Table B). These growing conditions were reflected in lower than expected stand counts. The available moisture supply was near the long-term growing season average, a significant change from the extremely dry season of 1988. Total corn acreage planted in 1989 was 2,300,000 with a harvested acreage of 1,970,000, up 23% from 1988. The Michigan Crop Reporting Service estimates the average yield to be 113 bushels per acre. This is a new all-time record yield surpassing the previous high of 107 bushels per acre in 1982. Total corn production was up 114% over the drought decimated 1988 crop.

Area harvested for silage has been estimated to be 300,000 acres with an average yield of 13 tons per acre.

How to Use This Bulletin

One-, two- and three-year averages are presented for all hybrids tested during 1989, 1988, and 1987. One-year data are less reliable than two- or three-year averages and should be interpreted with more caution. Confidence in corn performance data increases with the number of years and locations of testing. Two years' results, or more, are more desirable than one year's.

The tables show the following about the hybrids tested:

- Average moisture content at harvest.

2. Average yield (in bushels) of shelled corn at 15.5 percent moisture.

3. Average percent of stalk lodging (plants broken below the ear at harvest).

Hybrids are recorded in the tables in order of their approximate maturity (early to late) based on moisture at harvest.

Moisture content was determined from shelled grain samples at all locations harvested for grain and from chopped silage (fodder plus grain) in the silage trials.

Stalk breakage is caused by corn borers and/or stalk rot diseases. Two or more plots of the same hybrid in the same field may produce somewhat different results due to uncontrolled variability in the soil and other environmental factors. Replication and randomization of the entries are two methods used to reduce these errors. Since these methods do not eliminate all of these variables, differences necessary for statistical significance have been calculated for yield and moisture content.

The value calculated as the "least significance difference" or "LSD" is the amount that an individual hybrid would have to differ from the experiment average to be different from that average.

Hybrids with yields significantly better than the average grain yield at each location are marked with an asterisk (*) in each table.

Agronomic information for each trial is given at the bottom of each table. Fertilizer amounts are total pounds per acre of nitrogen, P₂O₅ and K₂O applied during the season.

How to Choose a Hybrid

Adaptation

The following map shows the location of the trials and divides Michigan into four maturity zones, but only in a general way. Local variations in weather, soil type and fertility, time of planting, and

other conditions all affect adaptation. Corn hybrids are often adapted to more than one zone.

Find the zone in which you plan to grow the corn, and refer to the table that gives results for the trials conducted nearest you. Also, refer to the other tables listed in your zone. A hybrid that has done well at two or more locations is more likely to be a good hybrid for your farm, too.



Corn Maturity Zones and Locations (*) of Trials

Planting Rate

High plant populations (20,000 or more per acre) should be considered only for soils consistently producing more than 100 bushels per acre. Rainfall deficiencies with high plant populations usually result in no increase in yield and frequently a decrease compared to 18,000 to 19,000 plants per acre. Lodging and harvest losses are often greater at higher populations.

Maturity

Hybrids are listed in the tables in order of maturity (early to late) based on moisture content of the grain at harvest. This is usually a reasonable, accurate measure of relative maturity in most years in Michigan. Early-maturing hybrids are generally lower in moisture content than later-maturing hybrids. Differences among hybrids in rate of drying in the field also affect moisture content at harvest, but usually do not greatly disturb the relative maturity ratings as determined by moisture content.

One percent more moisture at harvest means a delay in maturity of about two days. Corn is mature when moisture is about 32 percent in the grain or 38 percent in the ear.

For Grain

It is better to choose an early corn (below average moisture content) than a late corn for grain. The tables show that good yields do not depend on later maturity. Advantages of early-maturing hybrids are:

- They usually mature before killing frosts.
- Good-yielding early hybrids generally yield as much or more than late hybrids in most areas of Michigan.
- Early hybrids with lower moisture content at harvest reduce drying costs and market discounts for moisture.
- Mature, dry corn makes better livestock feed.
- You can harvest earlier in the fall when weather conditions are most favorable. Early harvest

may reduce corn losses resulting from broken stalks and dropped ears.

- Fall plowing of corn stubble may be possible with early hybrids on land not subject to erosion.

For Silage

The best silage contains a high percentage of grain. Hybrids that produce high yields of grain should be used for silage. High dry-weight production per acre is a better reason for choosing hybrids for silage than tons of green weight.

Corn for silage should reach the early dent stage well before frost in an average year. The early dent stage, when most of the kernels have dented, is the best time to begin harvest for silage. Dry matter production continues to increase until maturity.

Other Considerations

Choose early hybrids for late plantings, low soil fertility, sandy soils, muck soils, and for corn that is to be followed by a winter grain or cover crop.

You can obtain some degree of "crop insurance" by choosing two or three hybrids that differ slightly in their maturity. If one hybrid runs into unfavorable weather at a critical stage of growth, another may be less affected and produce a good crop.

Even though you have been growing a hybrid that has given good results, you may be able to improve your corn yield by trying one or more hybrids with better records in these trials. Well-tested, new hybrids are worth trying. You may want to try a new hybrid in a strip in the same field with your present hybrid.

Ways to Reduce Stalk Lodging

Several stalk-rotting fungi may cause broken stalks at harvest and create a major problem in corn production. Stalk rot occurs when fungi increase rapidly after the plant has matured or when the plant has died prematurely. Highest incidence of stalk rot occurs in years when corn matures early and when harvest is delayed. Infection and disease

Table A. Average, highest and lowest grain yield, moisture content, and stalk lodging at 19 locations in 1989

Location County	Number of Hybrids	Bushels per Acre			% Moisture			% Stalk Lodging		
		Average	Highest	Lowest	Average	Highest	Lowest	Average	Highest	Lowest
Monroe	123	141	198	88	21	27	16	3	7	0
Hillsdale-Irrigated	116	155	200	97	22	27	16	2	8	0
Branch	121	163	209	107	22	27	17	2	7	0
Kalamazoo	98	152	195	105	21	27	17	3	28	0
Cass-Upland-Irrigated	105	175	218	101	21	25	16	2	6	0
Cass-Muck Soil	59	86	139	60	24	29	20	4	12	0
Kent	84	157	194	118	23	27	20	2	7	0
Ottawa	83	146	195	110	23	31	18	3	10	0
Ingham	100	152	185	103	28	36	19	3	16	0
Sanilac	114	135	175	98	27	37	20	1	5	0
Saginaw	124	147	174	99	21	28	17	3	9	0
Huron	110	166	206	126	25	34	19	1	6	0
Isabella	88	121	158	74	18	28	16	2	6	0
Montcalm-Irrigated	79	168	210	117	18	25	15	3	8	0
Montcalm-Not Irrigated	79	116	160	70	18	25	15	3	8	0
Mason-Irrigated	42	138	169	117	18	22	15	1	5	0
Grand Traverse	48	95	124	45	20	26	16	15	54	3
Alpena	41	87	119	56	23	33	18	1	6	0
Menominee	32	106	126	85	28	40	21	1	9	0
Average		137	177	93	22	29	17	3	11	0.2

development are favored by warm, humid weather and abundant rainfall during the latter part of the growing season.

Hybrid resistance to stalk rot is only one of several factors that determine the extent of stalk breakage. There are no clear-cut cases of specific hybrids that can be depended upon consistently to resist stalk rot under all conditions of soil fertility, plant population, plant stress, and maturity. A major part of the difference in resistance to lodging appears to be mechanical—stiffer stalks do not break as soon when disease attacks.

The most effective practice to reduce losses from stalk rot is to harvest as soon as possible after maturity. Stalk breakage continues to increase rapidly in warm, damp weather when harvest is delayed. Early-maturing hybrids that mature in September will have more stalk breakage than late-maturing hybrids harvested in November and December. There may be little or no advantage to planting early-maturing hybrids if harvest is delayed.

To avoid problems, choose high-yielding, early-maturing hybrids, plant early and harvest early.

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Ways to Avoid Moldy Corn in 1990

Use the following recommendations to help prevent moldy corn in 1990.

- Plant early.
- Plant early to medium-early maturing hybrids.
- Harvest early—during October. Weather problems and harvest losses increase with later harvest.
- Plant for adequate artificial drying. Drying in the field and in the crib is slow and undependable in Michigan. Ready access to drying facilities will permit more timely harvest, prevent high harvest loss, and produce greater corn profits.

Seed Supplies for 1990

Production of hybrid seed corn in 1989 was considerably better than in 1988. Milder temperatures and more timely rains in most seed production areas resulted in high quality seed. Supplies of most hybrids should be adequate for planting in 1990.

Table B. Precipitation and temperature summary

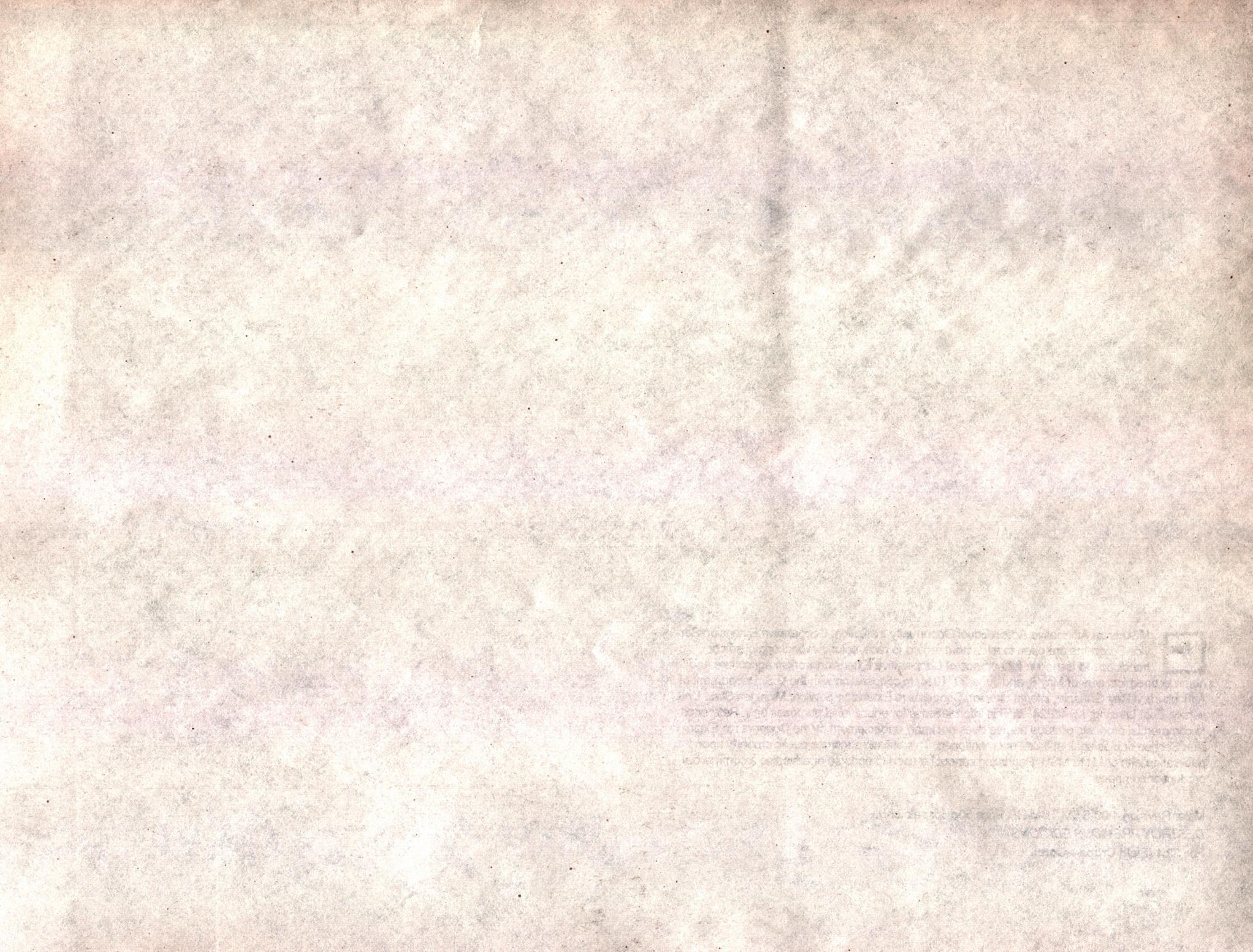
Location	*	May		June		July		August	
		AVE.	DEP.	AVE.	DEP.	AVE.	DEP.	AVE.	DEP.
Zone 1 (ave 4 loc)	TEMP	56.1	-2.1	66.9	.5	71.3	.4	68.3	-1.0
	PPT	7.9	3.8	5.5	2.4	4.8	1.2	2.7	-.6
Zone 2 (ave 3 loc)	TEMP	55.2	-1.9	66.0	-1.1	71.5	.5	68.3	-1.0
	PPT	5.3	2.7	4.0	.6	1.4	-1.8	5.5	1.5
Zone 3 (ave 4 loc)	TEMP	55.3	-1.2	65.3	-.9	71.4	1.0	67.8	-.9
	PPT	4.0	1.4	4.2	1.1	2.0	-.8	4.3	1.2
Zone 4 (ave 4 loc)	TEMP	52.9	-1.3	60.8	-1.9	69.3	1.6	65.8	-.2
	PPT	3.6	.8	3.7	.5	1.4	-1.8	2.5	-.8

*TEMP = Temperature

PPT = Precipitation

AVE = Average

DEP = Departure from long term normal





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