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Detasseling corn in iowa

August 7, 2019Autor 7, 2019 So in last post I talked about flaming and how it helps the pollination period for seed corn. Now I want to talk about detasseling, the first job of many Iowa kids that directly affects plant pollination. Farmers only detassel seed corn. Quick refresh: Seed corn is what will be planted as commercial corn next year. Commercial corn is what is made for cornflakes, ethanol, some plastic and corn syrup. Sweetcorn is what we all enjoy this time of year and are found in the freezer section of your grocery store. Seed corn is disassembled because it forces the male and female rows to cross pollination. The researchers have it all mapped out which traits they want gone down to the seeds (or pennies of the current plant). Each stem of corn has 2 flowers on it; the quack and the ear. As you pull the tassels of the females plants out you are left with the tassels of the male plant to pollinate the female ears. That's how they cross pollination. Detasseler makes a pass. Once a field of seed corn is starting to tassel then whoever the seed it is (Monsanto, Pioneer, etc.) determines when it's going time. First they will call a cutting crew. They have machines that buzz off the top of the female ranks. Then 2 days later comes dismantling machines. The 2 days allow for tassels to grow up through the leaves, so when its assembly machine goes through it is mostly to pull the tassel, not the whole plant. When driving down the highway this time of year it's easy to see the difference between a commercial cornfield and a seed cornfield. The commercial corn will have all tassels and a seed corn field will have 4 short rows without tassels then a high row of tassels. These are the 4 female rows and 1 male row. The way our machines work is each female row has 4 small tires that face each other and when the plant moves through the tassel is pulled out. Each 2 rows of females are controlled by a 'head' that actually has a laser that reads the height of the 2 rows. Based on reading the head will go up or down automatically to get the best possible pull percentage possible. Our machines have 6 heads for a total of 12 rows, which are removed each passing through the field. Near up your head. The black boxes on each side are lasers and the 4 decks spin inwards. We own 2 dismantling machines that are attached to the syringes. It's great to have multiple uses for machines! In these 2 machines we have 2 big guys, Steel and Jared (not brother Jared – we just like to keep everyone on their toes and hired another one). The best thing about these two is that they know their stuff and take these machines where needed. We couldn't possibly have both machines running in fields 40 miles apart if it wasn't for them. We are lucky enough to not only draw our own seed cornfields, but others as well, so when growers say it's go time it's time, no matter where the field or what day Week. A few days after our machines run through the field then walkers get their turn. We see many child herds, but also more adult herds each year. The part that was such a surprise to me personally was how high of a pull percentage machines average (about 90%). I never slowed down when I was a child, so all my knowledge was based on my friends and their complaints about how difficult it was. The way they spoke they had to do every single plant out there. I don't take anything away from the miles and miles they walk or the heat they do it in, but I was lead on the way down to the number of tassels being pulled by a 14-year-old. I actually didn't pull my first tassel until Josh and I were dating and I was riding with him in the machine and decided to give it a try. I would say that they make an interesting sound if you pull them just right (you can't hear that when you're in the cab of the syringe). The 2 machines ready to hit the road. It's really amazing to see the machine running through the field. Obviously the whole unit is moving, but then every head is adjusting up and down, all the tires are spinning, tassels popping out, hitting the guards and falling in between the rows. There are a lot of moving parts all happening at once. All this is done to facilitate the plant to produce the best possible seed for next year's planting. There is one more step for seed corn, which I will write about in a few weeks. It is simply called male spoil, because of course the female plant is the best. (I couldn't resist.) Thanks for coming to the site - check out our Instagram page for great photos! Until next time! -Laura ever wonders where corn seeds that the farmers plant comes from? To plant the millions of acres of corn throughout the Midwest each spring, farmers have to first buy seeds. The seeds they buy are often hybrid varieties that have beneficial traits like being drought tolerant or disease resistant. To get these special hybrids, farmers and the companies they work with need to make sure to cross pollinator corn. Corn pollen is spreading with wind, so how do farmers ensure that pollen from one type of corn lands on silk of a different type of corn to create hybrid? Dismantling. Every corn plant has both a male and a female flower. The tassel sits at the top of the plant and produces pollen. The ear of corn with silk then is the female flower. When the wind blows, pollen from the tassel will shake loose and fall on silk. Each strand of silk is associated with different seeds on the ear of corn. Pollen makes its way down into silk to pollinate the ovule and develop into a seed. When left to grow naturally, a corn plant will pollinate itself. To produce a better type of corn, different strains of corn are mixed or cross-pollinated. Seed companies contract with farmers to plant these fields. The companies work with the farmer to determine when to plant, when to detassel and when to Reap. Seed corn fields are are With two types of corn - one will have tassels removed and will carry the new hybrid seeds. These will be the 'female' ranks. The second will preserve its tassels and serve to pollinate the first. These will be the 'male' ranks. Fields are planted with three or four rows of female for each and every row of male. Up to 70% of tassels are mechanically removed. Then crews come through and clean the fields by hand removing any tassels that the machines missed. Timing is important because if you detassel premature yield can fall. If you wait too long, the majsplant will start pollinating itself. The window in the growing season to detassel is usually only 16-20 days long. Detassellers must remove 99.7% of tassels in the female ranks. This means that the herds can only miss 3 in every 1,000 plants! Every summer about 100,000 people, mostly students, head out to corn fields for detassel. Some companies even mobilize buses full of people and move throughout the Midwest after corn crops north as they mature. Of course, not all areas need to be removed. Most field corn does not need to be dismantled and the harvested corn will go to make cornflour, cornflour, corn syrup, ethanol and a myriad of other products. But you can easily recognize a seed cornfield with three rows that look like the top has been chopped off and a fourth row standing high. Detasseling corn is essential to produce the best corn seeds possible for the next growing season. And for more than 70 years detasseing corn has become synonymous with Midwestern culture. It's a ritual in itself. Corn is the number one cash crop in the United States with a value of \$12.1 billion. This method of hybridization has created a 6-fold increase in corn yields over the last 60 years. Have you ever dismantled corn, or do you know anyone who has? We'd love to hear about it! -Will We are one of the largest detasseling companies in the middle of the west. We have secure crews, well-trained managers and pay high competitive salaries. Please note in April 2021 for our next season! Every summer, thousands of Midwestern kids as young as 13 load on school buses early in the morning to do one of the hottest, dirtiest temporary jobs out there. They're corndeasselers. But this year there's a snag: Detasseling season is being pushed back because of a wet spring. The season, which usually lasts about a month and starts in early July, has been pushed back nearly two weeks. In addition to flooding along the Missouri and Mississippi rivers, rainfall across the region has been above average. Tyson Buresh co-owns Buresh Detasseling in Nebraska, and he said he's worried he won't have workers until the end of the season. That's because he and other deposition companies will start losing their workforce to pesky academics, forcing crews to go to a weekend-only schedule or count on children from schools starting out a bit August. A contractor already asked me if I should have children in the middle of the which would be the latest dates we've been going for the last 40 years, Buresh said. The good news? Not all corn should be removed. It is reserved for seed corn, which will be next year's commercial crop. In Nebraska, that's about 150,000 acres. Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts estimates that there are about 7,000 children who discourage each year. Makylee Ailes will work for her father's detask company for the fourth time this summer. It's not terrible, Ailes said. It's not the worst thing I've ever done. But it certainly takes a toll on you at the end of the season. It's a long season. Why detassel? Detasslers spend the day going row by row through corn fields, pulling tassels from the top of corn plants, discarding them in dirt. The plants can grow far above the heads of these young workers. Darin Doerr (left) and Joe Murman of Corteva Agriscience stand on a corn field near Utica, Nebraska. Darin Doerr is the production manager for the seed company Corteva Agriscience and worked as a detasseler growing up. The tassel is the male part of the plant, and it has pollen in it, so when it drops pollen it falls on the female part of the plant, which is silk, Doerr said. So as a pollen hits every one of these silks, and then it travels down silk, and that's what makes that core. Seed corn fields are planted with two breeds of corn, separated by rows. Removing tassels from a breed means that it cannot self-pollinate, to secure a hybrid seed. Aaron Saeugling, another detasseling veteran turned expansion field agronomist for Iowa State University, said a cutter removes about 90% of corn tassels. It's an actual machine with a blade, and so it cuts the upper part of the plant out exposing the tassel, so it's much easier to go in with a bollard, he said. They bring this machine in and it tries to grab the tassel and pull it from the plant. Twenty or 30 years ago, there were no machines to do the first 90% of detasseling, so teenagers did all the work. But even 90% is not good enough for seed companies. Children help them get to almost 100%. In return, its good money is earned. One removal company owner estimated the average 100 hours of work in a season comes out to \$1,500 for 100 hours of work in a season. Beginners make less, usually minimum wage. Makylee's father, Brent Ailes, is a high school principal and owner of Ailes Detasseling. His pitch to kids is that they can make a few thousand bucks in just a few weeks of work. And so the flip side is, I can work at Dairy Queen 20 hours here, ten hours this week, five hours this week all summer long, but I don't even have total lump sums that I could earn in detasseling which is a bit of a compact two- to three-week season, Brent Ailes said. He also says detasseling is part of Nebraska's foundation in agriculture. A mostly hidden tassel of a young corn plant. Nebraska is an agricultural state, so it's kind of our which means that we have a lot of children who are willing and and who knows that it is a good job, a good situation to teach work ethic, he said. There are thousands of kids, literally right here in Lincoln, who jump on crews and work this kind of business here in the summer. For kids like Makylee Ailes, hard work is made a little easier by having friends out in the field, too. It definitely makes it more fun when you have friends out there, because then you're not just all alone walking down the cornfield, she said. Detasseling may be hotter than scooping ice cream and dirtier than checking groceries, but teens across Nebraska will load into school buses and drive out into the countryside to earn some extra money this month because wet spring or not, the corn continues to grow. Allison Mollenkamp is a reporter with Harvest partner NET News in Lincoln, Nebraska. Follow her on Twitter: @allisonmollenk1 Copyright 2020 Harvest Public Media. For more information, visit . .