

# THE HAY STACK

**February 14, 2020**

## 7th Annual Fungicide Trip A Success!



### *Rock Ridge Farms*

Our first stop was Rock Ridge Farms, a third generation operation farming 6,000 acres total, 1,300 acres of which are sweet potatoes which are a high dollar, profitable crop right now. They're able to double crop wheat with soybeans in their climate. Soybeans and corn are not profitable. They are used more as a rotation than a money-maker. In order to procure 6,000 acres, they rent from more than 100 landlords! Stink bugs move from wheat to corn to soy to cotton and can destroy yields up to 50 bushel/acre.



Sweet potatoes are started in their on-farm greenhouse. It takes them 120 employees to maintain their sweet potato acres. They use the H2A program, hiring Mexicans to do the hard work on cutting and transplanting.

Americans are unwilling to do this work.



Cotton picker



Peanut harvester

### North Carolina Coastal Plains facts:

- 7 acres average field size!!!!!!!
- 120 bu/A is average corn yield (gets so hot at pollination)
- Plants group 6 beans (we plant group 1.8-2.9 here)
- Cash rent averages \$200/acre (for high value crop)
- \$75/acre cash rent on corn/bean ground
- No aerial application due to urbanization
- \$3500-\$4000/acre to buy ground



Fleet needed to farm 10,000 acres of specialty crops at Lancaster Farms

## Lancaster Farms

Our next stop? Lancaster Farms in Wilson County, North Carolina. Here, we primarily checked out their tobacco operation; however, they said they had tried growing nearly everything. It was neat to see the amount and different types of equipment they need to harvest all these other products; the majority of new equipment being leased for three years at a time. Lancaster's had made some major changes over the years such as: adoption of technology, improving their average bean yield from about 20 up to 45, quitting production of corn (doesn't pay), failing miserably with hemp, and focusing on tobacco, sweet potatoes and an array of vegetables. The labor required to get a tobacco crop was amazing, they had just begun planting some seedlings which they store in a greenhouse. Those seedlings take off and then must be maintained and mowed, then planted mid-April (when they transplant from greenhouse to field) at this point and time they are at the mercy of mother nature and have zero insurance for the crop. The ultimate goal is to get roughly 2500 pounds of dried tobacco leaves per acre, hauled out as 750 lb bales to nearest and highest bidder. This is only a



short version of a couple hour long tour but it was incredibly impressive to see how these guys operate and the work that goes into it.



## Tour Avoca, LLC



Our third tour was at Avoca. The Avoca sage processing plant was started in the 1960's by RJ Reynolds and became part of a holding company in 2017. The RJ Reynolds (tobacco) company was interested in the sage plant as a means to compete against the oriental tobacco, which was expensive but tasty to smokers. The tobacco market went back into parity in the 70s and 80s, and they needed to do something with the sage so the scent fixative market was born.

Avoca grows Clary sage. Clary sage is grown so that sclareol can be extracted from the plant. Sclareol is used as a fixative in perfumes and laundry products to make the scent last longer.

Before Clary sage they would use vomit from sperm whale for the fixatives. (Yucky)



## Tour Avoca, LLC cont...

This is a ten month crop, being planted in August and harvested in June. It is planted on raised beds for better drainage. At harvest it is chopped like silage and stored in silage bags, this way processing time is not limited. And the harvest is protected from the elements.

The biomass after production is spread out on fields, but is not as fertile as manure. The seed is produced in Oregon due to more favorable weather conditions there for the growing and harvesting of seed. The seed cost \$12 per lb. and is planted at 4 lb. per acre.

The next time you squirt your favorite perfume or sniff a fresh bath towel, think of the Clary sage farmers.



## Wright Brothers' First Flight Kitty Hawk, NC.

The Wright brothers chose Kitty Hawk for their flight attempts because of the wind (good for lift), sand (good for crashing) and lack of residents (couldn't steal their ideas). Orville Wright wrote in 1901 (just two years before their remarkable flight) that "man will never in 1,000 years fly". In one month's time, the brothers drug their plane up this hill 1,000 times! We walked up it...ONCE.



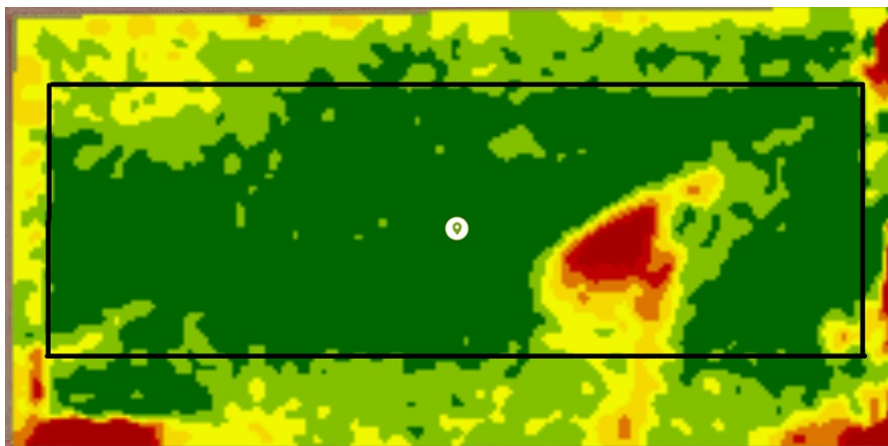
**Plenty of time for fun and food!!!!**



**Fungicide Pays Again!**

In a low disease pressure year, fungicides like Trivapro and Miravis Neo still have plant health benefits. It allows a plant to maintain photosynthesis on hot days while lowering the amount of water being transpired leading to more efficient plant growth. This was no low disease pressure year though, as we all know, a wet spring leading into a wet summer sets up a good environment for disease to take off. We had some anthracnose show up early in corn this year, along with our typical rusts, and leaf blights. On the soybean side, frog-eye leaf spot showed up fairly strong again along with our typical leaf blights, brown spot, and some white mold. Knowing we already had some disease in the plant and the potential for more to show up and rob yield, made a fungicide application an easier decision again this year. We did get a few side by side trials this year and, of the ones we were able to get yield data back from, showed up with a good return on investment.

	Fungicide	No Fungicide	Difference
South of Gayville (soybeans)	75.4	66.7	+8.7
Vermillion (Corn)	233	219.9	+13.1
North of Mission Hill (Corn)	219.4	206	+13.4







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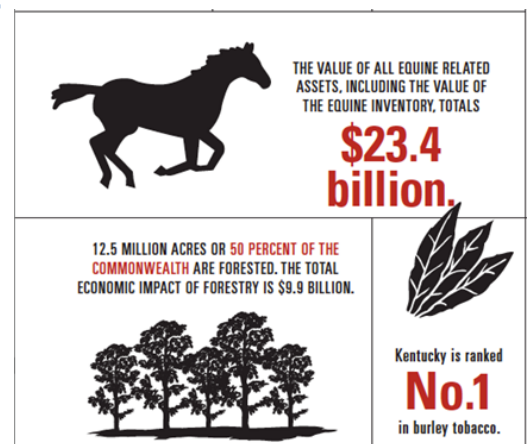
## Where's our next adventure in February 2021?

We will continue to earn your trust in all facets of our business and we'll continue to outthink the competition. We may be small but that makes us nimble - quick to adapt and make new decisions if we need. I'm not going anywhere. Myself and my crew will work hard to earn your business in 2020 and beyond.

I'm so proud of our fungicide trip! You guys know the agronomic value of fungicide, and we are all humbled at your trust in our recommendations to continue its use into the future. Now let's talk about our 2021 trip...First and foremost, thank you for your business! Spending five days with some of my favorite growers and colleagues makes my heart happy. I hope you had a great time. I want to thank Aaron Kromann, our new Syngenta rep, who has worked with Valley Ag Supply to again make our fungicide trip a reality! With 2019 being our first full year with our 'new' management team, we hope that you've noticed little change. That being said, there's not five minutes that goes by that I don't miss Greg or wonder what he would think of the job we're doing. But I must believe that he'd be proud of a successful sales year in spite of the weather in 2019, a building expansion, new customers and 100% support from our existing customers.

If you're curious about

- Bourbon
- Hemp
- The equine industry
- Caves and Corvettes
- And music



Please join us in exploring Kentucky and Tennessee!