

# Technology for crops

By Mike Holmberg  
Farm Chemicals Editor

## ■ New system lets you store yield maps online and compare results

A new service developed by HarvestMap Systems will let you upload your yield maps to the internet and tap into a database to see how your yields and hybrids compared to other growers. You are the only one that has access to information about your individual fields, but the data becomes part of a larger database.

The advantage, says Joe Nelson, president of HarvestMap, is that you get to compare your hybrids and fields to other hybrids grown under actual field conditions instead of in test plots.

When a grower uploads a data file from his yield monitor, two things happen, Nelson says. First, the system goes through a series of correction steps to identify any errors or outliers in the data. It also allows you to record the actual yield of the field if that amount is different from what the yield monitor shows.

Second, the system asks for information about the field and growing conditions. For instance, it collects information about the soil type, chemicals used and the weather conditions throughout the growing season.

"With our set of tools and services, farmers who have invested in yield monitors can get the detailed analysis and yield maps they're accustomed to, but we go beyond that," says Nelson. "Our vision is that the value of the data to the grower will be multiplied as it becomes part of a larger community. Our tools allow the farmer to ask the 'community of data' questions that will help him find what hybrid will work best for him."

### Tapping the database

Sam and Susan Meeker, two veterans of the precision ag movement, have been testing a beta version of the system and feel it has promise. They've been in the trenches as agronomists for local FS outlets in Illinois, then worked for Midwest Consulting Service and Case Corporation.

To test the HarvestMap system, the Meekers have been loading yield maps



Photograph: Mike Holmberg

**One plus for the HarvestMap System, say Sam and Susan Meeker, Brimfield, Illinois, is that it's not tied in with a company trying to sell you crop inputs.**

from Sam's father's farm. "We were coming back to our own farms and realizing that there are only a few factors that really matter. Maybe we ought to step back and look at the broader picture," Sam says.

When you enter the yield maps, you're able to plug in some general soil and weather data. You can use the database to find out which hybrids yielded best under similar soil and weather conditions—or under the weather conditions you expect.

### Estimating income is easy

You can also use the system as a quick income projection tool, Sue says. "You can enter your direct costs and indirect costs and do a field income statement. To me, it seems quick and easy. It doesn't require setting up a big Excel document. You just drop a few numbers in. You can be as detailed as you want to be or just use some ballpark numbers."

"This would be interesting for somebody who has been yield mapping for a couple of years and is looking to get a little more value out of their yield data," Sam says.

"I think the biggest thing going for HarvestMap – bar none – is that they're not a seed company or a chemical company," Sue says. "I think most farmers would be skeptical about pro-

viding this kind of information to a company that is trying to sell them inputs. That will carry a lot of weight."

### The cost of independence

Independence is also a disadvantage, Sam says, because the service needs to be paid for by growers.

The HarvestMap service will have an annual fee of \$300 and a monthly fee after the first month that will vary according to how many files a user uploads. Users who don't upload any files will also pay a total of \$400 spread over 11 months. Growers who upload yield files earn a 5¢ per acre discount in the monthly fees on the first 500 acres of files they upload.

"We want to reward growers who share their data," Nelson says, "because the more data there is, the greater value there is to our community of subscribers." **SF**

### Learn more

HarvestMap Systems, Inc.  
13016 fieldgate Drive  
Austin, TX 78753

Phone: **512/990-2030**

E-mail: **joenelson@harvestmap.com**

or **agriculture.com/go/0000**