



Seven Keys to Success

3/23/2018

At our Winter Seminar in Indianapolis, long-time biological farmer Tom Besecker of Greenville, Ohio shared what he termed the **"7 Keys to Success"**. Tom is an organic farmer and related these keys he uses, but they are tips that can benefit all growers.

1. **Balance and correct nutrient deficiencies.** If you have not done so for a few years, pull soil samples this spring to see where your soils are. In at least a few fields, ask for the "complete" testing package to check your water soluble nutrients and trace minerals. When the results come back, look for numbers that indicate nutrient tie-up or lack of tilth in the soil. *(Note: Your AgriEnergy rep would be happy to help you interpret your report and make recommendations. Something like low calcium, for example, may be impractical to correct on an entire field/farm before spring planting, but we might recommend you consider ways to impact the root zone with banded lime, gypsum, or a liquid calcium product such as **AgriBoost Ca** or **Caliber**.)*
2. **Improve soil quality, health and microbial life with AgriEnergy biological products.** Apply **Residue** to last year's crop residues. Add **Myco Seed Treat** to the seed box. Include **SP-1** with broadcast or starter mixes. All of these increase bio diversity and ramp up microbial activity in the spring, just when the new seedlings sprout or dormant perennials wake up.

3. **Reduce soil compaction and other crop stresses.** Are there drainage issues that can be improved before planting? Do fields have a compaction layer that can be addressed with tillage or spring cover crops? Above all, Tom stressed “Refuse to work your soil when it is wet. If you do (work it wet), you’ll pay for it later”.
4. **Be proactive with tillage and mechanical weed control.** Whether conventional or organic, well timed use of mechanical tools can greatly reduce weed pressures, saving the cost of additional herbicide or cultivation passes, and avoiding yield reduction from weed competition.
5. **Promote your crop’s vigor and health.** Becks Hybrids research has shown even a 24-hour delay in emergence can reduce corn yield by over 20 bushels/acre. Stimulate seedling vigor and early growth with **Myco Seed Treat** and in-furrow applications of **SP-1**. Combined with a good row starter like **4-21-4** or **PKT Blend 18**, this combination of bugs and food can encourage rapid germination, seedling health, and even emergence.
6. **Discourage weeds from germinating or reproducing.** Note heavy weed areas and take steps to reduce the size and severity of those areas. Keep from spreading seeds to other fields and farms by cleaning equipment. Avoid applying nitrogen to the soil surface where weed seeds are germinating. Let’s feed the crop, not the weeds!
7. **Consider the challenges of spreading animal manures unless composted.** Raw manure can carry pathogens. In addition, spreading large volumes can increase soil compaction particularly in the spring. A composted material that has become high quality humus has immediate benefits to the soil and the crop beyond just NPK values. *(Note: AgriEnergy Field Representative and experienced composter Alan Dale shared that raw manure, while rich in nutrients, is slow to release those nutrients. Only 35-40% of the nutrient content is available to the current year’s crop, and even that amount only happens with active microbial mineralization.)*

Tom summed it all up with these points:

- Provide & Balance Soil Nutrients
- Increase Bio Diversity & Build Carbon
- Manage Equipment & Soils Wisely
- Learn to “See” What You Look At
- Make Changes Gradually

AgriEnergy Resources would appreciate the opportunity to help you put a few (or several) of these practices into motion. Give your rep a call today. Don’t have a rep? Call our headquarters at **815-872-1190** for the name of the nearest AgriEnergy associate.