



Precision Planter Clinic Can Improve Planter Performance and Sugarbeet Stands

Consistent stand establishment is the foundation that supports high yields and quality for sugarbeets.

Properly adjusted and well maintained planters are key components in establishing excellent plant populations for sugarbeet production. A general recommendation is to establish a stand of at least 35,000 for 28-30 inch and 45,000 in 20-22 inch rows. This is equal to about 200 plants per 100 foot of row. Michigan State University Extension Sugarbeet Advancement research indicates that for average emerging varieties, we would generally expect about a 60-70% emergence under normal conditions.

Planters should be inspected annually with special emphasis on seeding units. Plates should be snug, not warped and the holes should be round. Plates that are warped or holes out of round should be discarded. Brushes and cut offs should be aligned correctly. The seed knockout also needs to be in good working order. Make sure all seals are working properly; any vacuum leaks will affect planting. Be sure to match seed size with proper planting plates and utilize recommended vacuum pressure. Research conducted in 2011 showed that too high of plate pressure increased stands by 20% and doubles by 15-20%. Plate pressure that was too light lowered population by 18% and increased skips by 6-15%.

Sugarbeet seed is planted very shallow as compare to other crops such as corn or soybeans. The average planting depth for sugar beet seed is about one inch. Planting depth variations of as little as a ¼ inch can mean the difference of seed being placed into moisture or out. Planters will need to be adjusted from field to field and as soil conditions change.

Stale seed bed planting has become popular but results can vary due to surface compactness between fields and soil types. Particular attention needs to be paid to planting depth and seed to soil contact. A research study conducted in 2011 on a very compact stale seedbed resulted in lower plant population when down pressure was too light.

Growers need to pay particular attention to planter maintenance, set-up and adjustment. Planting conditions can change greatly from field to field based on a variety of factors. This is particularly important in the production of sugarbeets. Producers need to be aware of the latest planting technologies and how they may improve planter performance. **A Precision Planter Clinic is being held on January 22, 2015 at the Michigan State University Saginaw Valley Research and Extension Center from 8 till noon. Cost is \$15 per person and is payable at the door. For phone reservations call 989-758-2500. See promotional flyer for further details.**

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