

Yellow Corn

Yellow corn plants this time of year are revealing a production issue that could be addressed with management strategies. Yellow corn plants are typically an indication of a fertility shortage. Whole plants that turn yellow may be short of nitrogen fertilizer. Other symptoms include firing bottom leaves, short corn plants and much reduced yield. Nitrogen is a mobile nutrient and can be leached from the soil, preventing corn roots from reaching the fertilizer. Corn plants notice this lack of nitrogen and plants turn yellow as a response. When this occurs early in the growing season, a post emergent application of nitrogen will address this issue.

In addition, a lack of some micro-nutrients can cause other yellowing effects to corn plants. Corn leaves with yellow streaks can be a symptom of micro-nutrient deficiencies such as iron or zinc. Soils that have high pH levels can make this situation worse, as high pH soils can actually “tie up” some micro-nutrients.

Although there are exceptions, usually adding fertility after tasseling produces very few yield advantages. Therefore, when nutrient deficiencies exist, early fertilizing is best.

Soil testing is recommended for both nitrogen and micro-nutrients. Soil tests will reveal nutrient deficiencies which can then be addressed by field. Once soil test results are in hand, a solid fertility management plan will address nutrient shortfalls.