

COMMERCIAL HAY OPERATION PAYS OFF EVEN ON RICH IOWA FARMLAND

Former Corn Farmer Now Grows Only Hay

Last year Arden Kiefer harvested more than 1,000 tons of hay off 160 acres of farms in central Iowa. Most of the hay was sold to nearby farmers who feel they can no longer afford to grow even a few acres of hay on their fertile corn and soybean land, some of the most expensive land in North America.

How then can Kiefer afford to plant his entire acreage to hay?

The most obvious reason is that there is a market for hay in his area. Hay acreage in Wright county in 1981 totalled only 4,100 acres, the lowest in Iowa.

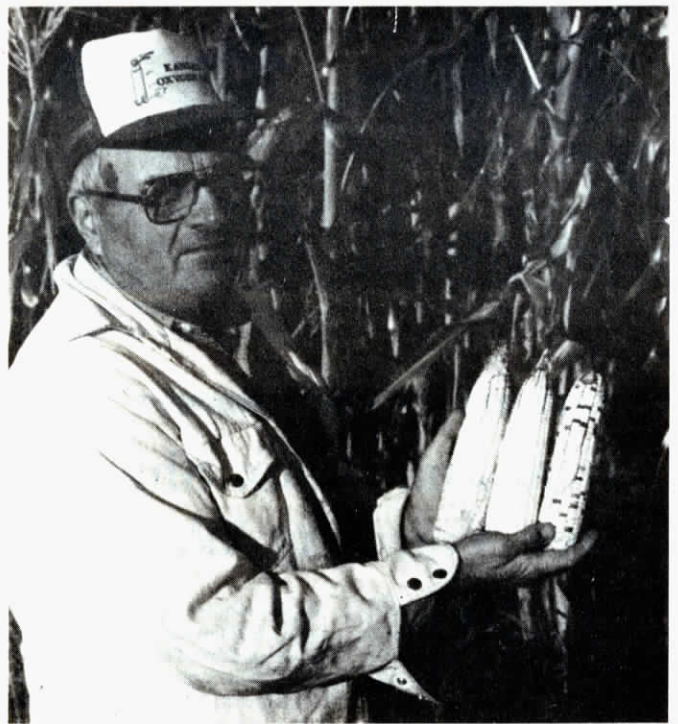
"There's a good market for high quality hay. Many farmers who grow just a few acres of hay now are finding that they would rather not fool with it," says Kiefer "There's also a good market to hobby farmers. My average size sale is 350 bales."

Hay production has cut Kiefer's equipment needs in half and has simplified many of the management

decisions. The farm is seeded with an alfalfa and grass mix that was supposed to be 85% alfalfa, but a mixup resulted in predominately grassy fields producing a hay he says goes over well with customers.

Kiefer hires about 15 local high school youth to help during harvest. Forty acres are cut at a time. Two days later, another 40 acres are cut while the first 40 are baled. Hay is baled in both 800-lb. round bales and 65-lb. square bales. Kiefer, who is also a manufacturer of livestock trailers, built his own automatic bale loading wagons and is now manufacturing those, too. Bales are stored in a huge building 227 ft. long, 60 ft. wide, and 16 ft. high. The 23,000 bales produced last year were sold directly out of the building. He never delivers.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Kiefer Built, Inc., Box 88, Kanawha, Iowa 50447 (ph 515 762-3201).



Nelson's corn resembles king-sized version of Indian corn.

12 TO 16 FT. STALKS

Kansas Farmer Grows Open Pollinated Corn

Loring Nelson, of Salina, Kan., is experimenting with an open-pollinated corn variety he feels has the potential "to surpass anything else on the market."

Nelson had been raising Indian Squaw Corn, which is a little known open-pollinated variety, for 15 to 20 years when he decided to cross it with two other unusual varieties. The first was "Mexican jumping corn", which he was able to buy on a limited basis from a local seed company, and the second was Reed Yellow dent corn, another obscure variety now grown only by experimenters. He got his seed from a grower in eastern Kansas.

"I used the squaw corn to get the size of stalk, the Mexican corn to get height and the yellow dent to increase the sugar content," Nelson says. "We mixed the three varieties and planted equal amounts in the same field and we've been replanting the seed from that cross for the last several years. Now it's finally stabilized into a uniform crop. The stalks are 12 to 16 ft. tall and many of the cobs are as big around as a coffee cup and very long. It makes a sweet silage and a nutritious feed grain."

The big-eared corn looks something like a king-sized version of Indian corn, with multi-colored kernels. Nelson says livestock seem to prefer silage made from the corn. "A test analysis has shown the corn contains 22 trace minerals compared to only 8 to 12 minerals in hybrid varieties so I feel it is more nutriti-



The stalks of Nelson's corn are upwards of 16 ft. tall.

ous."

The new corn has been yielding around 100 bu. per acre without irrigation and Nelson has been selling seed to neighboring farmers. Last fall, however, a prairie fire swept through hundreds of acres in the Salina area and wiped out his 10 acre plot. He was not able to sell seed on a wide-spread basis but had enough carried over from the year before to replant this year.

For more details, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Loring Nelson, Rt. 1, Salina, Kan. 67401 (ph 913 823-8270).

NOT COUNTED AS CORN ACREAGE

Popcorn Silage: Grow Corn And Still Join PIK

Some Midwest farmers are getting around corn acreage reduction requirements in 1983 farm programs by planting popcorn.

According to rulings by the ASCS, "Popcorn will not be included as corn in determining whether or not a farm has complied with permitted acreage in the 1983 Acreage Reduction Program."

That means farmers can grow unlimited acres of popcorn for silage, or even as a feed grain, even if they're full participants in the acreage reduction and PIK programs. Popcorn cannot, of course, be planted on acres set aside from feed grain production but it could be legally planted on land intended for soybeans or small grains.

What kind of crop is popcorn?

"Popcorn silage has a feeding value roughly equal to that of silage made from dent corn, and it yields about 70% as much," says Bob Lungren of Mid-Plain Sales Co., Lake View, Iowa, a company promoting popcorn as a way to get around government restrictions. Lungren says university agronomists back nutritional claims for popcorn. In fact, feed grain tables show popcorn is higher in protein and several other digestible nutrients.

Lungren points out that planting popcorn for silage is not a new idea. "In 1963, farmers also discovered this

loophole in the government programs. Articles in farm publications urged them to use it as a silage but warned them to be prepared to prove that the corn would pop if they were ever challenged. As long as it pops it's not considered corn.

"The cost of growing popcorn is comparable to dent corn. We recommend a planting rate of 8 to 10 lbs. per acre for a plant population of approximately 24,000 to 30,000 plants per acre. The fertilizer rate is approximately three-fourths of that needed for dent corn. Most plateless planters can be used to plant it and, due to the popcorn kernel having a hard outer coat, it can be planted earlier than field corn without deterioration in the ground or being damaged by cold, wet weather. Popcorn is also more tolerant to drought than regular dent corn. Popcorn yields in excess of 90 bu. per acre have been obtained in many areas of the corn belt," says Lungren.

Popcorn seed is packaged in 50 lb. bags and is priced at \$1.75 per pound. Mid-Plain Sales Corporation's seed is a mixed variety that produces a mixed blend with no value on the commercial popcorn market.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Mid-Plain Sales Corp., P.O. Box 146, Lake View, Iowa 51450 (ph 712 657-8585).