do it with edible beans and we always saw a bit of stimulated growth as a result," he says. "We have to look seriously at this for weed control."

There is a risk of drying out a field even more and it's not an option for poor rotations with little organic matter, he notes. But for those with good rotations that include forages shallow cultivation will offer some benefits.

RealAgriculture.com agronomist Peter Johnson is less optimistic when it comes to helping these stressed crops. "There will be lots of things promoted," he says. "And pretty much nothing will help."

He uses the example of Twitter suggestions about deep ripping between the rows to loosen tight soils and freeing up the roots. Johnson is skeptical. "Maybe – and that is a huge maybe - it can work where they have more than 30 inches of topsoil. But where we have six inches, the chance of success is small."

Johnson acknowledges that a bit of tillage, even an anhydrous tooth, going through heavy clay can provide a yield benefit. But if you do true deep ripping and the weather turns dry? "It is called 50 bu/ac less," he warns.

Johnson also warns growers that "tough, tight soils are unlikely to be solved by a biological additive at one litre/acre." On the other hand, he advises grower to keep an eye out for nutrient deficiencies and make corrections.

FOR AGRIS and Wanstead Co-op CCA Dale Cowan there is no such thing as a general recommendation this year. "It is a year to be very site-specific on a field-by-field basis. We should spend more time than we ever have before on scouting and learning."

While there is lots of yellow corn, Cowan would rather have growers focus on the larger areas of the field that are doing better. "Make sure they are adequately supplied with N and sulphur especially on sandy soil," he says. "Do some tissue testing to confirm nutrient uptake."

If there is a deficiency, figure out why. "If you want to apply foliar fertility do a test strip, follow through to final yield, and learn."

Keep an eye on the poor patches as well. As they fall behind there will be an impact on fungicide timing, he says. "Uneven crop growth stages always make it challenging to be effective in whichever treatment is chosen."

Cowan advises soybean growers to keep an eye out for white mould as well as K and Mn deficiencies. The latter is less likely in tight, compacted soils but, if needed, an early foliar application, preferably during the early vegetative stages, will provide the best payback.

For BASF CCA Ken Currah the key rule is never give up on a crop that is well-managed and still has potential. Crops like corn and wheat "seem to have a way of pulling through."

Many of the questions he fields deal with fungicide timing for variable or drought-stressed corn. "I encourage growers to consider the field conditions at the six to 10-leaf stage and not so much on the period prior to tassel."

"Yield is set early and, even if a crop is stressed in the two weeks prior to tassel, yield potential likely has not been lost. I've seen too many times in my career where pre-tassel drought took growers off the fungicide plan, and they regretted it. If the crop started strong, don't give up on it."

He also advises managing western bean cutworm "regardless of crop condition." Scouting will be the key, not just for these pests but also for silk emergence and uniformity for Group 3 fungicides for DON reduction," he says.

"Overall crop prices are strong; don't give up!"

The Keenan diet feeder, shown here, has been certified as sustainable by Carbon Trust, a global organization that helps organizations and businesses become more resource efficient and reduce their carbon impact

Dairy feeder gets environmental sustainability certification

The Keenan diet feeder has been proven to reduce methane emissions on-farm

BY LILIAN SCHAER
Ontario Farmer

Ireland – A diet feeder manufactured by Irish machinery brand Keenan, owned by Alltech, has been certified as the first environmentally sustainable diet feeder in the world.

The certification was issued by Carbon Trust, a global organization headquartered in the UK that works with private and public organizations to become more resource efficient and reduce carbon impact.

"Farmers are getting more pressure to reduce methane and CO2 emissions, so we are pleased to be able to give people tangible ways to make a difference," says Stuart McGregor, General Manager of Alltech Canada, adding that Keenan's solution does this without affecting production or profitability.

According to McGregor, independent trials have shown that cows can produce 16 per cent more milk per kilogram of feed using Keenan's proprietary feed delivery system. The mix helps feed retain a fibre structure that stimulates further rumination – this allows for greater energy absorption by the animal and maximum feed conversion, which boosts herd performance.

It has also been proven to significantly reduce herd health issues such as milk fever, ketosis and retained membranes, not to mention a reduction in assisted calving by up to 53 percent, the company says.

"Sixteen per cent improvements in output are being achieved from the same feed, which has been independently verified and tested," says Keenan General Manager Matt Higgins. "In Canada, this allows producers to achieve the same production as before but with a lower number of animals, resulting in savings in feed costs and all the extra labour associated as well."

In awarding the certificate, Carbon Trust stated the Keenan diet feeder and the Keenan controller had been found to be capable of increasing the efficiency of the rumen by delivering feed that is more easily digestible for cattle, resulting in improved feed conversion efficiency.

The certification process included a review by Carbon Trust of documentation, academic references and on-farm trial results completed in Keenan's various global markets.

"They validated the link between better rumen efficiency and reduced methane emission, which means reduced methane production per unit of output, for example litre of milk or kilogram of live weight gain," said Higgins.

Keenan was founded in Ireland in 1978 and is best known for manufacturing feed and mixer wagons, selling its product in more than 75 countries around the world and becoming part of Alltech in 2016.

Ontario Harvestore is Keenan's Ontario distributor. Compared to competitors in the Canadian market, the company says Keenan is competitively priced, but the simplicity of Keenan's mixer design means it takes a third less energy to operate, reducing fuel costs for farmers.

"The Carbon Trust accreditation is a powerful endorsement, which enables us to further help farmers reduce their on-farm carbon footprint, while increasing their profitability," said Higgins.

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