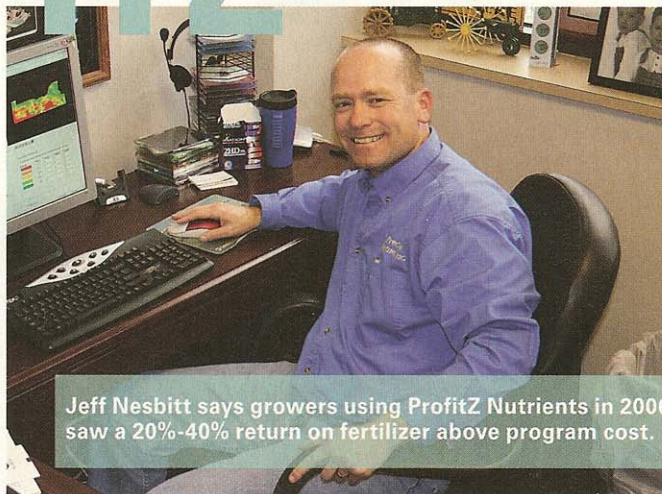


Prescription For PROFITZ

Precision Partners has seen a huge jump in takers for its application recommendation program, thanks in part to hikes in fertilizer prices.

BY LISA HEACOX
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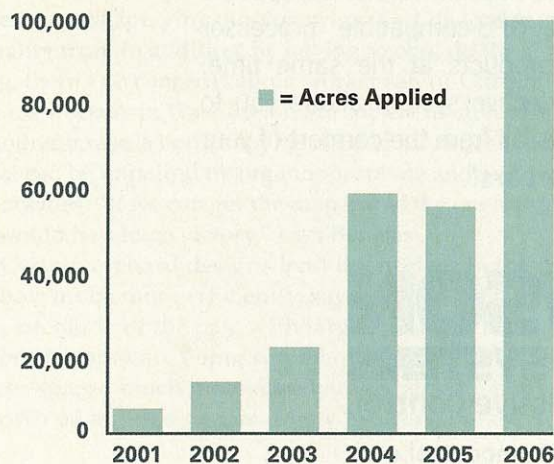
Jeff Nesbitt says growers using ProfitZ Nutrients in 2006 saw a 20%-40% return on fertilizer above program cost.

LAST year about this time, Jeff Nesbitt of Precision Partners, Fergus Falls, MN was feeling pretty optimistic about prospects for new clients. Retailers he talked to were truly getting a handle on the advantages of variable-rate fertilization, and they were ready to make the jump into offering the service to growers, especially in light of exorbitant fertilizer prices. His company's program, ProfitZ Nutrients, carefully tailors variable-rate maps.

"It's been easier for these retailers to go out and talk to the grower about a solution to expensive fertilizer, vs. 'You just have to pay for it,'" says Nesbitt.

Indeed, the latest figures for the 2006 season are in, and growers saw significant fertilizer cost savings — to the tune of \$12.12 per acre — with no negative effect on yield, thanks to ProfitZ Nutrients. Nesbitt reports that "with an average savings of \$12 per acre and an average price of \$7, I would be comfortable saying growers were getting a 20% to 40% return on fertilizer above the program cost."

Product Acceptance
ProfitZ.nutrients



Amazing Acceptance

Those returns came on some 98,000 acres mapped and applied by ProfitZ dealer-users in nine states in 2006 — a total that grew from approximately 50,000 acres in 2005. Crops included corn, wheat, and malt barley.

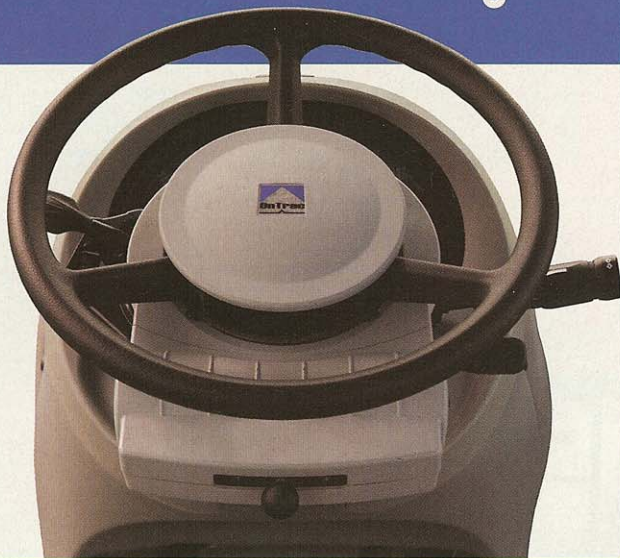
That doubling of acreage makes sense to Nesbitt: "I really think the farmer is searching for an answer to managing the high cost of fertilizer other than just cutting the amount he puts on. The same thing is true for the retailer. He's searching out a solution to an expensive price.

"It was in early 2005 when things started to get very expensive, and as that oil and fertilizer price has gone up, so has the acceptance and savings per acre," he summarizes.

In June 2006, Precision Partners had 19 dealers signed on for the program, and as of early fall, the figure had risen to 30 — including five United AgriProducts (UAP) pilot locations in Minnesota, North Dakota, Iowa, and Illinois. That's

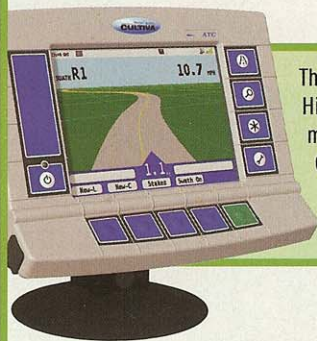
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(Continued from p.20)

a lot of growth in a very short period of time.

He would note that this is no "overnight" success story. His company started nearly 10 years ago, in 1997, and he chuckles, "I must have made a dent in the wall with my head after all these years," spending many hours helping to educate both dealers and growers on the benefits of precision application. "The acceptance level for farmers is very high. When we get to sit down with a grower and show him what the potential benefit is in actual dollars per acre, he's very interested in using ProfitZ and wants to give it a shot," Nesbitt points out. "It's convincing dealers that farmers want this, they're looking for it."

Putting Together A Program

What Precision Partners does with its ProfitZ Nutrients program is help dealers create very individualized fertilizer recommendations for growers — as well as generate

No Field Is Perfect

Do your grower-customers have problem yield areas? Jeff Nesbitt of Precision Partners says your on-staff agronomists shouldn't always try to bring in more fertilizer — and bust their chops to try to fix application in these locations to make fields perfectly even fertility-wise.

"A lot of times, fertility is not the main problem in the first place — it's the soil type, lack of moisture, or too much moisture that is causing the yield issues," he says. "We're working within the constraints of what a field can do."

A veteran agronomist, Nesbitt started his precision career in the early 1990s as a crop consultant and later, agronomy manager of a Cenex/Land'O Lakes fertilizer plant in the Red River Valley. His current company has actually mapped more than 1 million acres for fertility and more.

He would advise dealers to listen carefully to growers. "They're out there with tillage equipment and combines all the time and know fields the best of anyone," he points out.

the actual computer file for the variable-rate controller on an application rig, once it's time for an application.

A Precision Partners staff member visits a dealer to train them on-site. Dealers actually have a piece of the ProfitZ software installed on their computers — which can be a laptop for work in the field, in the shop, or in a farmer's office. That software helps users gather key agronomic data. And it's custom-programmed with a user's county information — such as historical remote sensing imagery. A dealer can "clip" a grower's field from the county images.

Farmers and the dealer are looking at historical remote sensing from a field that defines yield variability. Once defined they then decide on a yield goal for the upcoming season, explains Nesbitt. The map analysis includes an economic comparison of the ProfitZ plan and the farmer's typical fertility plan. The farmer knows he is saving costs on fertilizer before he buys ProfitZ. This approach is "very unique to us," he adds.

Pulling together dealers and farmers to "do the agronomy" is key. "We often go out and talk to the farmers with the dealer to help get the process started," he explains.



"We have a strong philosophy of 'training by doing' when helping dealers learn this product."

Field data and yield plans are sent to company offices for ProfitZ staff to make the final application maps.

Tweaking Needed?

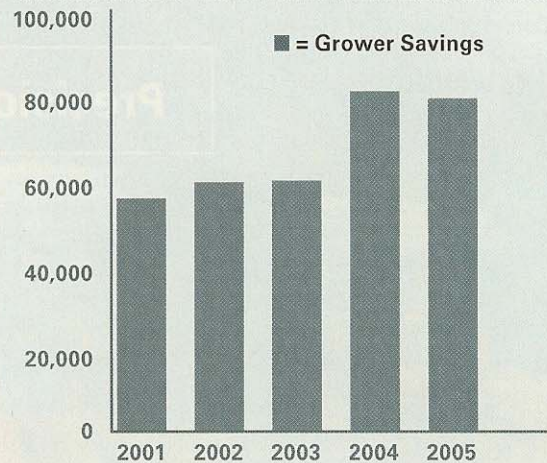
Dealers often like things done faster, Nesbitt points out — so he and his staff have considered putting the application

Market Drivers

Fertilizer change in cost over time per ProfitZ. nutrients, ProfitZ.sugar.



ProfitZ Benefits for Growers
Significant fertilizer cost savings with no negative effect on yield.



didn't. They generate a "Top 5" list of improvements and work on them during the off-season. "The software and process is really driven by things the customer says he really would like to have," he emphasizes. Upgrades are simple enough, done via the Web — or other ways if a customer does not use the Internet.

In another cost-saving measure, Precision Partners helps buyers use the precision equipment they may already have on hand. "About 90% of our acres are spread through a floater or applicator that's already variable-rate or is one step from being variable-rate," he explains. His company is a back-up source of precision hardware, if needed.

It's all about making variable-rate fertilization as accessible and easy-to-use as possible.

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