What would you do if you could add some additional growing days to your fall season? I doubt many would argue that with high input costs and volatile output prices, farming is done on a razor thin margin. More simply put, making money in Agriculture these days is just darn hard to do! With that statement out of the way lets go back to my original question, would a longer growing season help the equation?

We are working on a study with a producer just south of Hillsboro comparing short season (86 days) vs a fuller season (104 days) corn. As we gathered results both corns look good, but without question the longer season should out yield its shorter season competitor. How many growing days can we gain? And can those days help us produce additional revenue?

With this study we took approximately 80 acres and planted 40 of those with the 86-day corn. Once the short season corn is harvested, those 40 acres will be split evenly, where on one 20 a monoculture cover crop will be planted. In this example a monoculture is defined as grass only. The other half will have a mix with brassicas. At this point cattle will be turned out to graze. Cattle will be weighed prior to turn-out and again when removed.

Within both cover crops exclusion cages will be set out to measure differences in forage production. Along with these differences we should also be able to measure differences in cattle performance.

Back to the original question, will the days gained net us enough forage, and ultimately cattle performance, to offset the loss in corn yield? Honestly one year of production cannot fully answer this question, and so we hope this study can be replicated in the future and tested in different environmental conditions.

If you any thoughts about this study or any other questions I can’t answer, give me a shout, I love to talk. Marion County Office phone 620-382-2325!