

SRPF Field day

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Loehr Dairy trials multi-species planted in between corn rows

Sheboygan River Progressive Farmers (SRPF) sponsored a field day on Aug. 2 at Loehr Dairy, LLC in Mt. Calvary. Nearly 25 attendees learned about planting multi-species between 60-inch corn rows.

Joe Loehr, co-owner of Loehr Dairy, presented how his farm owns responsibility for taking care of the environment in his community. Their goal on the farm is finding forages, in addition to corn, that will improve the cow's diet to make more milk while continuing to conserve the soil.

"Corn is a great feed," Loehr said. "But it takes a lot away from the land causing erosion, bare soil and sometimes mud during harvest."

Loehr Dairy tried an experiment of planting three different multi-species mixed between 60-inch corn rows. On May 17, there were three 90-foot plots planted in the experiment. The first plot consisted of corn with various species including sunflower, cover, soybeans, flax, BMR sorghum and buckwheat. The second plot consisted of 60-inch corn rows with clover, vetch and buckwheat. The third plot consisted of 60-inch corn rows with cow peas, forage peas, BMR sorghum, kale, soybeans and buckwheat.

A few lessons learned from the field trials are that buckwheat acts as natural weed suppression, flax adds omega to the cow's diet for nutrition and kale seemed to dominate the other plants. Loehr also learned that corn doesn't like to compete with other crops, the other crops use the nitrogen the corn needs to grow. And with the drier season this year, the limited rainfall has played a factor.

The plan for the trial is to grain chop the crop for the cows this fall and then plant a cover crop that will over winter. Next year, Loehr Dairy will continue to trial progressive species as they continue to improve soil benefits in the area.