

Looking back



Looking through some old books, I came across the yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture for the year 1903 and found some data that I thought was interesting.

Near the back of the book were statistics of various crops for the past decade at that time, and they prompted me to do some calculating.

In short, the average per-acre wheat yield in the U.S. for the 1900 crop year was 12.3; fast forward to 2012 and that number jumped to 46.3—a 276 percent increase.

If you take that same increase for the next 112 years, it would equal an average per-acre wheat yield in the U.S. of 174 bushels in the year 2124.

Average corn yield per acre in 1900 was 25.3 bushels; 112 years later in 2012, the average was 123.4. So the increase from 1900 to 2012 was 387 percent; if you extrapolate that same percent change to the year 2124, it equals an average corn yield per acre in the United States of 601 bu/acre.

The point of all this is really just to highlight how far we have come in the past century and what it would look like if those trends were to continue into the future.

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Extension Corner

Written by Brian Talamantes
