Organic Row-Crop Farming Strategies

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Farm Facts:

- Northwest Iowa
- 1500 acres
- Certified Organic in 1998
- Primary Crops - Corn, Dry Beans, Oats
- Food-Grade Market Focus
Elements of Organic Farming Success

The Uncontrollable
1. Weather

The Controllable
1. You!!!
2. Drainage
3. Crop Rotations
4. Fertility Management
5. Weeding Methods
6. Genetics
7. Other Operations... planting, tillage, field walking etc.
“Yes, your biggest challenge may be you!”
Drainage

- Water Management
  - More Oxygen in Soil
  - Better Nutrient Availability
  - Better Root Development
  - Less Weeds
  - Timely Field Operations
  - Less Compaction
  - Very High Yield Correlation
Crop Rotations

- Spring and Summer Seeded Crops
- Cover Crop use
Fertility Management

- Nutrient Release
- Previous Crop Nutrient Tie-Up
- Application Timing
- Feed the soil to feed the crop
- Residue Removal?
- Soil Test!
Weed Control

- Field Cultivation - 2X
- Tine Weeder
Weed Control

- Rotary Hoe - 1-2X
- Cultivation - 3X
- Hand Weeding
Genetics

- Full-Season Corn
- Early Emergence and Vigor
Planting Practices

- PATIENCE!!
- Warm Soils
- Corn - May 1-15th
  - 1½ - 2” Deep
  - 30-35,000 Population
- Seed Treatment
- Uniform Emergence!!
- Beans - Late May
Tillage Practices

- Deep Tillage
  - Improved Water Infiltration
  - Increased Deep Root Development
Strip-Cropping!!
Questions??