

## Area Crop Report 12/2 – 12/6

### Up, Up, and ... Away?

Several U.S. agriculture drone service companies could soon be grounded if a ban on technology from Chinese drone maker Da-Jiang Innovations (DJI) becomes a reality. The Department of Defense (DoD) added DJI, the world's largest drone manufacturer accounting for 70% of the global civilian market, to its list of Chinese Military Companies in January '24. Then, this past September, the House of Representatives passed the Countering CPP Drones Act. This legislation would place a domestic ban on DJI devices by prohibiting them from operating on U.S. communications infrastructure, and if passed would ground all DJI drones within the U.S. This is already a reality in some states, with neighboring Arkansas passing legislation Act 525 banning the procurement and operation of drones made by companies in China or other countries on the official U.S. blacklist starting in 2027. This could have large repercussions on farms and companies where drones are recognized as serious tools in their agronomic toolbox, either as a scouting service or precision application source. However, this does not mean that all UAV products would be outlawed. Companies such as Hyllo, manufactured in Texas, would still allow farmers to have precision crop care going forward using autonomous UAS systems and ground control software. While drones, UAV's, UAS's, whatever you may refer to them as, are not a true replacement for boots on the ground scouting and application, it shows potential in niche operations and provides more precision data points than years before.



### Late Winter Wheat Planting Considerations

High saturation levels, cost analysis and varying soil temps have delayed potential winter wheat planting in local areas. If you are still considering sowing winter wheat this first of December, here are a few quick points to consider:

- 1. Up your seeding rate:** Later planted wheat equals less fall tillering, which are more productive than those put on in the spring. To help combat, adjust your seeding rate by roughly 30% or about 150,000 to 300,000 seeds per acre for every week after October 10<sup>th</sup>, limiting at 1.8 million seeds per acre. Higher seeding rates won't fully compensate for reduced tillering, so consider if it is operationally feasible.
- 2. Fertilize accordingly:** Applying fertilizer at planting in later-than-anticipated time frames will help boost fall tillering numbers and compensate for limited fall growth. Starter fertilizers, such as Ammonium polyphosphate (APP) or an orthophosphate product such as TSP (triple super phosphate), are ways to compensate for lower phosphorus uptake during cold weather. Debate between poly and ortho based P-sources can get loud, and one we can tackle later this winter. I also like to see 20-30 pounds of nitrogen applied in late planted environments to again help with fall tillering.
- 3. Planting depth can be critical:** Frosts have already occurred, which means ground soil is freezing and thawing, also known as soil heaving. To protect from heaving and winter temperatures, make sure to have drills or air seeders calibrated correctly so that planting depths are uniformly 1-1.5 inches deep. Later sown plants will be smaller and have a shallower root system during winter, so planting depth can be crucial to a crops success come spring time.

*“Soil has no politics”*

**Hugh Hammond Bennett**