

**Belize Sustainable Agriculture, Ltd.**  
**Joint Venture Farming Report – September 9, 2013**

**General Overview**

As I wrote last week, during the week ended August 31, 2013 weather conditions were very wet! Following that, this past week, San Carlos received about 3 inches of rain from September 2 to 9; Blue Creek also received 3 about inches of rain during that time. Soil moisture is currently at the “water logged” stage in Blue Creek and “wet” in San Carlos. With San Carlos being of the red, well drained soil type, the 3 inches affect the crop less than the 3 inches in Blue Creek. The current forecast is for more intermittent rain, mostly light showers and an occasional thunderstorm.

Our reports between now and harvest will continue to refer to the methodology used to estimate yields, which was described in detail in our August 19, 2013 report and is based on the following Purdue University paper:

<http://www.agry.purdue.edu/ext/corn/news/timeless/yldestmethod.html>

**Thiessen Family Farms** – 286 acres (143 Irrigated / 143 Dry – 100% Corn)

Corn was planted May 28, 2013. The Thiessens are now finished with all major applications. The corn is now at its final height in the 8.5'-9.0' range and the harvest now looks set for around the early part of the last week in September. The corn ears are ripening a little faster than expected, hence the earlier harvest. The plants are staying green (or alive) longer, which is something that the farmers are not used to seeing very often. This allows the ear to develop better, and is likely to be the result of higher fertilization rates and a year of good rainfall.

Spider mites and worms were a moderately severe problem this season, but the bigger problem was a lack of agro chemicals to treat them. This is an important and enduring lesson for future crops, especially as the acreages become larger. Key agro-chemicals will have to be pre-purchased and stocked in secure locations to ensure they are available immediately when needed.



Thiessen Corn Field – August 26, 2013

Thiessen Corn Field - Dekalb 7088 (Sept. 2, 2013)

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Thiessen Field – Southwest Corner (September 9, 2013)

As can be seen in the picture above on the right, flooding is a bit of a problem on the south west part of the Thiessen field. Some drains had been cut during the dry season, but obviously not enough. I talk to the neighboring land owner yesterday about cutting a drain across his land which is still under jungle. He gave me permission to do the work and so the Thiessens are in the process of getting a drain in. With the corn stalk still being green I don't anticipate a material crop loss due to the water, provided we can get the water off. This again shows that drainage is as important as irrigation.

Otherwise, the Thiessen crop continues to look very good! As we wrote in previous reports, at this point the Thiessens can only sit back and wait for the corn to get ready for harvest. Insects should no longer be of major concern, as the corn has progressed through its more vulnerable stages, although the fields will be subject to regular inspection and prompt remedial spraying. The ears are drying nicely, kernels are getting hard. Harvest should be in the last week of September. One spray application of Tordon was applied early this week for vines that are starting to show up and will be a problem for harvesting if not addressed. On inspection yesterday the vines were drying up very nicely.

There is clearly room for improved insect management as well as improved fertilization programs.

We have already begun discussions with our JV partners to implement various insect management programs that are much more proactive than historical norms in Belize. As an example, placing baited traps in the corn fields to detect worm moths as soon as they appear in numbers would allow for more timely spraying before moths can lay large numbers of eggs. A significant drop in ear worm damage could help increase yields by 15%-30%. This approach, costing only a few dollars per acre, could increase per acre revenues by \$100+.

Fertilizer programs will also be developed via extensive and better controlled trials that measure the impact of various levels of macro and micro nutrients on various soil types using various application methods. As we have pointed out to our partners, who are already seeing some significant signs of success in this season's crop, it makes sense to spend well focused money on fertilizer if each dollar of investment generate two, three or even four dollars of extra yield.

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Preliminary Yield Data for Thiessen fields

No additional crop Survey was performed in the Thiessen fields since August 26<sup>th</sup>. We expect to do one final Survey shortly before harvest to assess kernel size. A couple of ears were looked at yesterday and the kernels are ripening very nicely.

**We are now maintaining our weighted average yield forecast from the Thiessen fields at 120 to 140 bushels per acre.** This compares with our initial blended (irrigated and non-irrigated) target of 100 bushels per acre, and historical blended yields of 85 bushels per acre.

**TF Plantations – 342 acres (259 Irrigated / 83 Dry – 100% Corn)**



The above picture overlooks Fields TF1, TF2T and TF3, also known as “the small pivot field”, which was planted on June 10-12, 2013 with seed varieties DeKalb 7088, Syngenta and Pioneer 30F35. TF2T is a trial plot which has strips of all 3 varieties, about double the fertilizer, and is almost 100% irrigated. 3 inches of rain were received at the TF farm this past week and the soil has good moisture levels. Since the soil is a well drained soil, drowning of the crop is not a problem.

Nothing has changed with these fields, which continue to look really good. All scheduled treatments are now finished and no further work except remedial spraying is expected until harvest, which should be mid October. Corn stands at about 7.5 – 8.5 feet tall. This field got an application of Tordon this week for vine control and the vines are also dying off nicely. There is also some grass that is showing itself in TF1, TF2 and TF3, indicating that the grass control was not ideal but should not materially affect yields. The ears are drying very nicely. No further worm damage is evident.

Even with our rains being near perfect this year we saw this week how irrigation is so important. The Tordon was applied via ground rig and Henry went along with the spray rig to have a closer look overall his field. The irrigation pump was started up 3 times early in the crop and Henry says that where the pivot irrigated, the corn plant is significant taller compared to where there was no irrigation.

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Preliminary Yield Data for TF Plantations Fields TF1 - TF2T - TF3

No additional crop Survey was performed in the TF Plantation fields since September 2<sup>nd</sup>. We expect to do one final Survey shortly before harvest to assess kernel size. A couple of ears were looked at yesterday and the kernels are ripening very nicely.

**We are now maintaining the weighted average yield from the TF Plantations fields TF 1-2-3 to 125 to 145 bushels per acre, and setting TF4 at 130 to 150 bushels per acre.** This compares with our initial blended (irrigated and non-irrigated) target of 107 bushels per acre, and historical blended yields of 90 bushels per acre. The TF Plantations yields (historic and target) are higher than the Thiessen yields principally due to higher percentages of irrigated land.



TF Plantation Field TF4 (Sept. 9, 2013)



TF Plantation Field TF4 (Sept. 9, 2013)

The above pictures are from Field TF4, also known as “the Large Pivot field”; it was planted 27-28 June, 2013. Seed varieties planted are Pioneer 30F35 - 75 acres, DeKalb - 7088 - 23 acres and Syngenta - 105 acres. The corn is very good looking! It seems that Brian Fehr (son of owner Henry Fehr) has been able to control the pests quite well even though worms have been problematic in TF1/2/3. The plants are now fully grown, 8.5 feet (102 inches) tall. Silking is done. Silk is drying off nicely. Preliminary yield data remain very promising. All corn ears that were checked did not show any further signs of worms being present.

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**D&H Farms** – 224 acres (0 Irrigated / 224 Dry – 125 acres Corn / 99 acres Soybeans)

**Soybeans**

The soybeans were planted June 27-28 and they are currently about 28 - 30 inches tall. 3 inches of rain fell this week on this field and soil conditions are now distinctly in the wet category. This field still has a bit of a grass problem; it does not seem to be affecting the plants too much in the flowering at this time. Plants are looking good: they continue to improve in color. Typical plant height for this variety is around 30-34"; these plants currently are 28-30". I expected them to be full height by the time they finish blossoming. I am not sure how much taller they will grow. This variety (Huasteca 400) is more resistant to disease and high moisture, but can also take drier conditions than other varieties. The picture on the right below shows some really nice nitrogen fixing nodules, which indicate a very healthy root system (which should also help the next crop!). The rain that we have been having this last week is a bit of a concern for flowering. However, so far I have not seen any flowers or pods fall off due to rain or fungus.

A preliminary survey of the D&H Soybean field was carried out yesterday, however it is too early to draw any reliable conclusions as the pods are forming; they will fill out in the course of the next fortnight. Therefore we cannot accurately assess the true pod count, which is a critical data point. What we can say is that plant count is low (~52k/acre) but with a high pod count (~83). The critical factor to assess yield will be what percentage of the pods which have formed will fill out. As we won't have a good feel for this for another fortnight, we will defer any yield estimates until then



D&H Soybean Field (Aug 31, 2013)



D&H Soybean Field (Sept 9, 2013)

**Corn**

The small field of some 24 acres planted on June 11, the corn is above 7 - 8 feet high. This field received 3 inches of rain this week. It is very healthy looking corn. The corns silk is drying off nicely. No further worm damage is evident.

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No additional crop Survey was performed in the DHC1 Corn field since August 26<sup>th</sup>. We expect to do one final Survey shortly before harvest to assess kernel size.

**We are maintaining our forecasted weighted average yield from this small D&H field of 100 to 120 bushels per acre.** This compares with our initial target of 71 bushels per acre (!), and historical blended yields of 70 bushels per acre.



D & H Field 2 (Sept 9, 2013)



D & H Field 2 (Sept 9, 2013)

The above pictures are of field DHC2 (field 2), the last of the JV crops to be planted this season, which was planted on Friday the 26<sup>th</sup> of July. This field received a glyphosate burn down application hours before planting. The field is cleaning up nicely from the burn down. Corn varies in size, from 18 to 48 inches tall on the east side (left picture) of the field and 36 – 48 inches on the west side (right picture) of the field. This difference in height in a certain area is mainly due to water logging at certain points of the field especially after constant heavy rains like last week. The difference in height between the east side and the west side is fertilizer. The west 30 acres got an additional 2.5 gallons liquid fertilizer at planting. With some extra nitrogen we believe this field will still do well. The corn is looking greener this week than last week, a step in the right direction. An application of 46-0-0 was applied on Saturday and going forward we will be applying three different levels of nitrogen to the field, and will report on this as the season goes forward. The late planting means that this crop will probably be harvested around December 1<sup>st</sup>, but our view was very much “better late than never”. With the rain having continued this week it has been a bit of a problem applying urea (46-0-0). Since N moves very easily we prefer to have a few days of no heavy rains after applying urea. We hope we can get back on schedule with the different rates. Foliar applications of N are being applied when we can’t do the dry N application. It has been so very wet on this field for so long already that I’m getting a little concerned. If the rains continue we will need to be prepared to be satisfied with a less than great yield off this field. Again drainage is so very important. This is an important lesson for the Cayo 1 property, which is predominantly composed of rich, dark soil. Designing and implementing an extensive drainage network will be critical for protecting crops in years of above average rainfall.

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**Neufeld Family Farms – 117 acres (0 Irrigated / 117 – 100% Soybeans)**

Jacob Neufeld finished planting on June 28, 2013, and despite what looked at first like a low stand on his field, the crop is now looking very good. These fields have received 3 inches of rain in the last week, although the red soils in the San Carlos area tend to drain very well. These beans are really looking good! The fields are as good as done with flowering and pods are forming very well. A pod count was done yesterday.



Field #JN4- Planted June 28, 2013: 20 acres



Field #JN3- Planted June 27, 2013: 17 acres



Field # JN2 - Planted June 27, 2013: 20 acres



Field #JN1 – Planted June 27, 2013: 60 acres

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JN1 Picture on the left you can see large pods and more small pods forming.

A preliminary survey of the four Neufeld soybean fields was carried out on September 9<sup>th</sup>. As with the D&H field, it is too early to draw any reliable conclusions as the pods are forming; we also expect that they will fill out in the course of the next fortnight.

What we can say is that plant count is very low (~27k/acre), which is likely due to insufficient seed being available at the time of planting and poor germination (this is similar to the problems Pete Dyck experienced on his soybean field which he re-planted). On the other hand, pod count is extraordinarily high (~155!!!). So the critical factor to assess yield will be what percentage of the pods which have formed will fill out. As with the D&H field, we won't have a good feel for this for another fortnight, so we will defer any yield estimates until then

An important early conclusion we are drawing for soybean farming in Belize is how important it will be to have the right quality of soybean seeds (e.g. high germination rate) and to plant to the right density. This will likely require conversion to 15" rows from 30" rows (subject to trials). Historically the main reason this has not been done in Belize is the lack of specialized equipment (which is not that expensive!), as well as the continuation of past farming practices ("That's how my father and grandfather did it!").

A well cared for Soybean field that has a plant density of ~100,000 plants which produce 30 to 40 good pods will yield 50 to 66 bushels per acre. We believe that, on irrigated ground and with proactive pest and disease management, these will be achievable yields. They will make soybean farming in Belize highly profitable!

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**Summary and Conclusion**

We continue to be well pleased with how the various crops have developed, and most of them continue to look really good; all we need is for the rains to abate somewhat, which should happen based on normal year rain patterns (of course these days, what's normal?)

Grain prices were unchanged from last week at the lower levels. Corn is now selling for BZD 0.255/lb. (\$7.14/bushel); Soybeans are at BZD 0.55/lb. (\$16.50/bushel); Milo is at BZD 0.22/lb. Belize Corn continues to maintain an attractive premium to the Chicago near contract (~\$4.90/bushel).

**Early indications for corn yields continue to be very encouraging! Thanks to the progress at TF4, and despite the corn ear worm impact at TF1/2/3 and the recent rains, we remain comfortable that achieving an average corn yield of >130 bushels/acre will be possible. The two remaining unknowns are kernel size and combining losses; we will have a feel for the former within two weeks and the latter by the time the Thiessens complete their harvest in less than 3 weeks' time.**

**As we wrote last week, we continue to find more and more areas on which to focus additional research in future crops. We are more and more convinced that there will be numerous ways to enhance yields, each bringing a modest contribution but as a whole we are beginning to consider that the long term objective should be to double Belize's historical yield levels.**

Thanks!

Abe Dyck

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<b>Grower</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Field #</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Irr?</b>	<b>Soil Type</b>	<b>Crop</b>	<b>Seed Variety</b>	<b>Plant Date</b>	<b>Stand - Date</b>	<b>Fertilizer Program</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Thiessen</b>	SC	1	143.0 142.8 <hr/> 285.8	Y	Sandy loam (Red)	Corn	DeKalb 7088 (25,000 seeds/acre)	May 28	6.5' - 7/13 7.5' - 7/19 8.5' - 7/27 8.5' - 8/3 8.5' - 8/19	170lbs/acre 18-46-0 183lbs/acre 46-0-0	Fertilizing complete. Total pure N this season = 115lbs/acre, versus historic 40-50lbs/acre. Note lack of "K" vs TF fields. Silking underway late July Silk starting to dry off on some ears` Kernels are getting hard 8/19 Ears continue ripening/browning 9/2 + 9/9 <b>Very Healthy</b> <b>High Yield Forecast</b>
<b>TF Plantations</b>	SC	TF1	57.99 14.00 <hr/> 71.99	Y N	Sandy loam (Red)	Corn	DeKalb 7088 (31,000 seeds/acre)	June 10	18" - 7/13 36-42"-7/19 48" - 7/27 8' - 8/3	220lbs/acre 10-26-26 110lbs/acre 0-0-60 65lbs/acre 40-0-0-6 148lbs/acre 46-0-0	Fertilizer program calls for 330lbs/acre base Fertilizer and 150 lbs/acre pure N. This is over 150% higher than historic levels and consistent with requirements for 125-150Bu/acre yields Silking underway 8/3 Silking finished, silk drying off 8/19 Ears continue ripening 9/2 + 9/9  <b>Healthy, with some ear worm</b> <b>High Yield Forecast</b>
<b>TF Plantations</b>	SC	TF2T Test Plot	14.72	Y	Sandy loam (Red)	Corn	DeKalb 7088 Syngenta Pioneer 30F35 (38,000 seeds/acre)	June 11	18" - 7/13 36-42"-7/19 47" - 7/27 8' - 8/3 8' - 8/19	330 lbs/ acre 10-26-26 330 lbs/ acre 0-0-60 140lbs/acre 40-0-0-6 260lbs/acre 46-0-0	Test Plot getting major fertilizer boost (up to 100% extra) vs. TF1 and TF3 (which are already way above historic levels) Harvest will be monitored for different result vs. TF1 & TF3 Silking underway 8/3 Silking finished, silk drying off 8/19 Ears continue ripening 9/2 + 9/9  <b>Healthy, with some ear worm</b> <b>High Yield Forecast</b>

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<b>TF Plantations</b>	SC	TF3	46.40 5.59 <u>51.99</u>	Y N	Sandy loam (Red)	Corn	Pioneer 30F35 (31,000 seeds/acre)	June 12	18" – 7/13 36-42" – 7/19 46" – 7/27 7' – 8/3 8' – 8/19	220lbs/acre 10-26-26 110lbs/acre 0-0-60 65lbs/acre 40-0-0-6 148lbs/acre 46-0-0	Same strategy as TF1 Little bit slower in silking 8/3 Silking finished, silk drying off 8/19 Ears continue ripening 9/2 + 9/9  <b>Healthy, with some ear worm High Yield Forecast</b>
<b>TF Plantations</b>	SC	TF4	140.02 63.56 <u>203.58</u>	Y N	Sandy loam (Red)	Corn	Pioneer 30f35 75 acres DeKalb 7088 23 ac. Syngenta 105 ac. (27,000 seeds/ac).	June 27-28	7-8" – 7/13 12-14" – 7/19 30-36" – 7/27 42-46" – 8/3 7-8.5' -8/19	220lbs/ac 18-46-0 110lbs/ac 0-0-60 142lbs/acre 46-0-0	Same strategy as TF1, some difference in fertilizers due to local availability issues. Tasseling and silking 8/19 Silking finished 9/9  <b>Very Healthy</b>
<b>D &amp; H</b>	BC	DHS1	99.37	N	Heavy Black	Soy	Huasteca 400 33.44 lbs/acre ~94,000 seed/acre	June 27-29	3-4" – 7/13 7-8" – 7/19 8-10" – 7/27 10-12" – 8/3 14-18" – 8/19 24-28" – 8/25	40lbs/ac 15-15-15	Summer soybean trial in heavy black Blue Creek soil. Limited Fertilizer program due to modest soybean needs and local soil conditions. Compare with JN. Crop Replanted June 27-28 after first seed had very low germination rates.  <b>Looking promising, but water a concern</b>
<b>D &amp; H</b>	BC	DHC1	24.43	N	Heavy Black	Corn	DeKalb 7088 (Seeds/acre 26,000)	June 11	3.5' – 7/13 5' – 7/19 6.5' – 7/27 7-8' – 8/3 8'+ - 8/19	100lbs/acre 14-36-12 65lbs/acre 46-0-0	Summer corn trial in heavy black non-irrigated Blue Creek soil. Fertilizer program calls for 150lbs/acre base Fertilizer and 75 lbs/acre pure N. (low range but 50% above historic levels)  <b>Mostly Very Healthy, but water a concern</b>
<b>D &amp; H</b>	BC	DHC2	100.56	N	Heavy Black	Corn	DeKalb 7088 Syngenta Pioneer 30f35 (seed rate 28,000)	July 26- 27	4" – 8/3 16" – 8/19 16-36" – 8/25	192 lbs/ac 14-36-12 40 lbs/ac 46-0-0 50 lbs/ac 46-0-0	Same as DHC1

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										50 lbs/ac 46-0-0 115 lbs/ac 46-0-0	<b>Very Promising 8/19 but water a concern 9/9</b>
<b>Neufeld</b>	SC	JN1	60.73	N	Sandy loam (Red)	Soy	CARDI 1088 28 lbs /acre ~78,000 seed/acre	June 27	4-6" – 7/13 7-8" – 7/19 8-10" – 7/27 15-19" 8/3 27-33"-8/19 30-36"-8/26 32-38" -9/2	120lbs/acre 15-15-15	Summer soybean trial in sandy red soil. Fertilizer program calls for moderate increase in base and foliar applications  <b>Now looking good given below average germination rate 9/2</b>  <b>Survey shows Low plant count with very high pod count 9/9</b>
<b>Neufeld</b>	SC	JN2	20.17	N	Sandy loam (Red)	Soy	CARDI 1088 28 lbs/acre ~78,000 seed/acre	June 27	4-6" – 7/13 7-8" – 7/19 8-10" – 7/27 15-18" – 8/3 27-33"-8/19 30-36"-8/26 32-38" -9/2	120lbs/acre 15-15-15	Same as JN1  <b>Now looking good given below average germination rate 9/2</b>  <b>Survey shows Low plant count with very high pod count 9/9</b>
<b>Neufeld</b>	SC	JN3	16.56	N	Sandy loam (Red)	Soy	Huasteca 400 28 lbs/acre ~78,000 seed/acre	June 27	4-6" – 7/13 7-8" – 7/19 8-10" – 7/27 16-19" – 8/3 27-33"-8/19 30-36"-8/26 32-38" -9/2	120lbs/acre 15-15-15	Same as JN1  <b>Now looking good given below average germination rate 9/2</b>  <b>Survey shows Low plant count with very high pod count 9/9</b>
<b>Neufeld</b>	SC	JN4	19.82	N	Sandy loam (Red)	Soy	CARDI 1088 28 lbs/acre ~78,000 seed/acre	June 28	4-6" – 7/13 7-8" – 7/19 8-10" – 7/27 15-18" – 8/3 27-33"-8/19 30-36"-8/26 32-38" -9/2	120lbs/acre 15-15-15	Same as JN1  <b>Now looking good given below average germination rate 9/2</b>  <b>Survey shows Low plant count with very high pod count 9/9</b>