

slightly less (\$172.15) and the third highest return was to continuous soybeans (\$163.90). The return to the organic system in which manure was charged at application cost was \$114.88. Charging manure at the cost of equivalent fertilizer gave net returns to this system of \$92.84. Although these returns were substantially less than those received by the most profitable systems, the higher organic return (\$114.88) compared favorably to the returns to the two conventional systems employing the same corn-soybean-corn-oat/sweet clover rotation.

The main reason for the low net returns of the organic systems relative to the corn-soybean, grain sorghum-soybean and continuous soybean systems were lower yields for corn and soybeans and the fact that the organic systems had part of their land in oats/sweet clover, a low value use.

Helmets et al also considered the stability of net returns to the various systems, measured by the standard deviation of the returns over the 8 years. By this indicator, net returns of the two organic systems were more stable than all but 2 of the 11 conventional systems.

For each system Helmets et al also counted the number of years in which net returns fell below \$100 per acre. The organic systems did not compare well in this respect.

In conversation with one of the authors Helmets said that in east-central Nebraska most farmers use a corn-soybean rotation, which is consistent with the finding that over the 8 years studied this was the most profitable system.

James (1983) used a linear programming approach to compare the relative profitability of alternative and conventional farms in 3 locations in central, western and southern Iowa. Data were collected from a variety of sources and used to construct profiles of "representative" alternative and conventional farms in the three regions. The principal difference between