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Look, Mom ... no yield monitor!

New service provides remote-sensing-based yield maps. ■ *By Tom J. Bechman*

Look, Mom … no hands! Who doesn't remember that famous line from the earlier days of television?

Typically, you would see a smiling youngster peddling a bicycle, hands at the side. The camera panned off just before the youthful rider frantically grabbed the handlebars.

Curt Ross of CalMar Mapping Services, Remington, Ind., isn't trying to impress Mom, but his feat is equally amazing. Ross recently announced to the world that he could produce higher-quality yield maps *without* an on-the-go yield monitor.

It's not magic or camera hocus-pocus, Ross insists. Instead, it's sound science, he says.

"We start with remotely-sensed images late in the season," Ross explains. "Then we go into the field at targeted points and check what's there."

Before mapping, Ross asks for yield information on a whole-field basis after harvest. Then he produces a map that looks like any other yield map – only Ross claims it's much more accurate than yield maps created with data from yield monitors.

GETTING THE FINE DETAILS

Ross stakes his claim on the higher resolution of remote-sensing compared to yield monitors. In simple terms, he collects more data from smaller areas through remote-sensing imagery than a combine yield monitor collects.

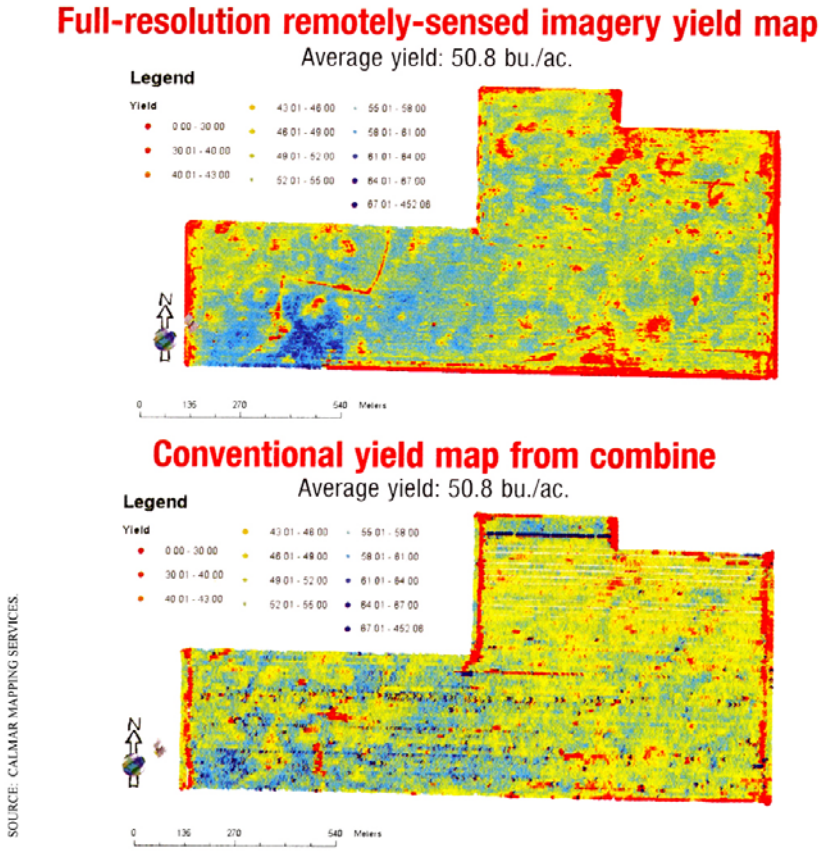
Last fall, he piloted the concept with remotely-sensed images shot by Agri-Vision, Columbus, Ind. "The aerial images showed me information on 30-inch by 30-inch areas," Ross explains. "Most yield monitors collect one data point from an area 30 feet wide by 20 feet long."

Ross didn't just wake up one day and decide to dazzle folks by creating maps without a monitor. "It started in 1998 when we were trying to identify tile lines," he explains. "We got so many more pixels, or points of information, with remote-sensed images that we realized we could produce a superior product."

Although Ross envisioned yield mapping some time ago, he held off, waiting for remote-sensing by satellite to become practical. "The biggest drawback was getting timely data," he recalls.

Tired of waiting, Ross opted for images shot from an airplane. Confident that the technology works, he's offering the service this fall. Producing a yield map without a monitor is priced at $3 per acre. He can map corn, soybeans, mint and alfalfa.

To learn more, contact Ross at *curtr@calmarlabs.com* or his associate, John Brost, at (219) 261-3448 or *johnb@calmarlabs.com*.



SOURCE: CALMAR MAPPING SERVICES