

Research revealed at Delaware Farm and Home Field Day

Delaware scientist wants more beans

NEWARK, Del. - Forty to 45 bushels an acre is a good soybean yield today, but some farmers often get much less. They also occasionally get as many as 60 bushels an acre in single fields or parts of a field. So far, however, no one has been able to do this on a consistent basis. For example, Delaware's state average is down around 25 bushels an acre.

Delaware Extension agronomist Frank Webb would like to see growers on the Delmarva peninsula realize higher yields much more routinely and he's set up a demonstration project at the University of Delaware's Georgetown Substation with this goal in mind.

What Webb has done is to take all the various tillage practices used to raise soybeans in this area and set them up in test plots at the substation farm where they can be compared. Laid out side by side are conventional plantings using a moldboard plow, along with chisel plow, subsoil and no-till treatments. Although plant populations are the same throughout the plots, some beans are planted in 30 inch rows, some are spaced 15 inches apart and some are drilled in broadcast. Various cover crops have also been used, to see how these affect performance.

For his comparisons the agronomist has chosen the full-season soybean variety, Essex, which as a good

performance record on the peninsula. His cover crops this year are hairy vetch, crimson clover and rye, used with different tillage treatments. Next Fall he hopes to add Yuchi arrowleaf clover, a vigorous forage legume, to his list of covers.

Specific objectives of the study are (1) to compare tillage methods, (2) to compare row spacing within tillage methods and (3) to evaluate the performance of different cover crops with soybeans. The project should last 3 to 4 years and when it's over, Webb hopes to be better able to tell farmers just how to reach those magical high yields everyone dreams about.

"We know that soybeans are good scavengers that use left over fertility well as opposed to new fertility," he explains. (For example, the state's record 81 bushel an acre yield a few years ago came from a field that had been planted in asparagus for a number of years and was in soybeans for the first time.) Since the plant does not respond well to direct nitrogen applications, it seems essential to determine its response to the organic nitrogen supplied by various cover crops.

Some of the plots in the present comparison have been prepared with an in-row subsoiler which breaks up the soil's hardpan, to see if such treatment of the ground has any effect on plant performance.

Visitors to this year's Farm and Home Field Day, Wednesday, August 10 at the Georgetown Substation, will have a chance to observe this and other research and demonstration plots aimed at boosting yields in the crops grown in Delaware.

Field Day activities begin at 9:30 a.m. and include bus and wagon tours of the plots, as well as a special homemaker program, a diagnostic plant clinic, a farm safety program - "Project Well Aware", plus numerous other exhibits and demonstrations.

A traditional fried chicken lunch will be available at noon in the grove (tickets



Extension agronomist Frank Webb checks out soybean performance in demonstration plots at the University of Delaware's Georgetown Substation. Comparison of different production practices should show farmers how to boost yields.

\$2). Activities will conclude with a watermelon break at 3:30.

This popular annual event is sponsored by the

University of Delaware's Agricultural Experiment Station and the Delaware Cooperative Extension Service.

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