

Solid-seeded soybeans put money in producers' pockets

LIMBURGERHOF, West Germany — Farmers who are good production managers can put extra dollars in their pockets by converting from traditional wide-row soybeans to solid-seeded or narrow-row beans.

That observation was voiced recently by Edward S. Oplinger, University of Wisconsin agronomist, at an AgriView Seminar sponsored by BASF Wyandotte Corporation here. The AgriView Seminar was attended by more than 50 U.S. agribusinessmen to learn about innovative farm production techniques.

Oplinger said farm managers who have their production programs under control can expect to increase their soybean yields by 1/2-bushel per acre every time their row width is narrowed by just one inch. For example, just by reducing his row width from 30 to 20 inches, a grower potentially could increase yield by 5 bushels per acre.

Put another way, Oplinger pointed out, a grower potentially could pick up about \$3 more per acre every time row width is narrowed by one inch if soybeans are selling at \$6 per bushel.

Narrow-row soybeans are drilled in row widths ranging from 20 down to 10 inches. Solid-seeded beans are drilled in rows no further apart than 10 inches.

Oplinger said the yield response of soybeans to solid-seeding has been known since the 1950s. But he said farmers couldn't seriously consider solid-seeding until the advent of improved drills, new soybean varieties and the introduction of effective

postemergence herbicides in the late 1970s.

Because solid-seeded soybeans are too narrow to walk between, let alone mechanically cultivate, effective control of grasses and broadleaf weeds by postemergence herbicides usually is essential. Effective postemergence chemicals offering broadspectrum broadleaf weed control without crop damage have been on the market since 1976.

Generally speaking, Oplinger said, research indicates that shorter, less branched and earlier maturing soybean varieties respond best to drilled beans in any given production area. He said extensive research is underway at universities throughout the Soybean Belt to develop new varieties suited to solid-seeding.

Oplinger said solid-seeded soybeans tend to have denser canopies than can be more conducive to disease development by restricting air movement. However, he added, studies indicate the higher podding height of solid-seeded plants produce seed with less disease and higher germination.

"Thus," Oplinger concluded, "solid-seeding may actually be a technique for improving seed quality."

"In most years, Oplinger observed, "soybeans yield more when planted in early May than when planting is delayed to late May or early June. This is particularly true in the shorter growing season areas where maximum yields mean early planting."

But in cases where farmers want to double crop soybeans behind

small grain crops, or weather prevents planting on schedule before early June, Oplinger said, "part of the penalty for delayed planting," can be avoided by solid-seeding.

Oplinger said soaring production costs, coupled with double-digit inflation and interest rates, are convincing soybean farmers to try new production techniques capable of providing them with optimum yields. He said those practices also include minimum tillage, crop rotation and soybeans double cropped after small grain crops.

"Many of the innovations are in the embryonic stage of development and refinements are constantly being made," he said. "Cultural practices of the future which are being studied and developed may be available to the farmer within the next 5, 10 or perhaps 15 years." Oplinger said other developments include "super inoculants" and plant growth regulators (PGR's).

"Super inoculants, capable of fixing larger amounts of nitrogen have been identified in growth

chambers and greenhouse studies. Oplinger said super inoculants are capable of enhancing nitrogen availability but researchers are still studying how to make it available under actual field conditions.

Oplinger said PGR's potentially could alter the plant structure or even one of its basic physiological processes to enhance yields, reduce lodging, increase pod set, decrease harvest loss, increase light interception or improve grain

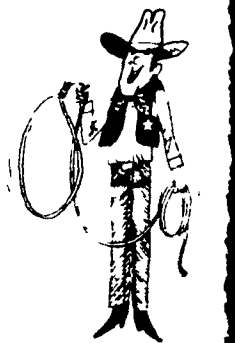
quality and quantity. Researchers are still working to identify the compounds that will enhance growth.

"New techniques for soybean production are emerging every day," Oplinger noted. "Not all production areas or even growers within any given area will be able to utilize them completely. Differences in soil, climate and individual growers' situations will dictate their acceptance."

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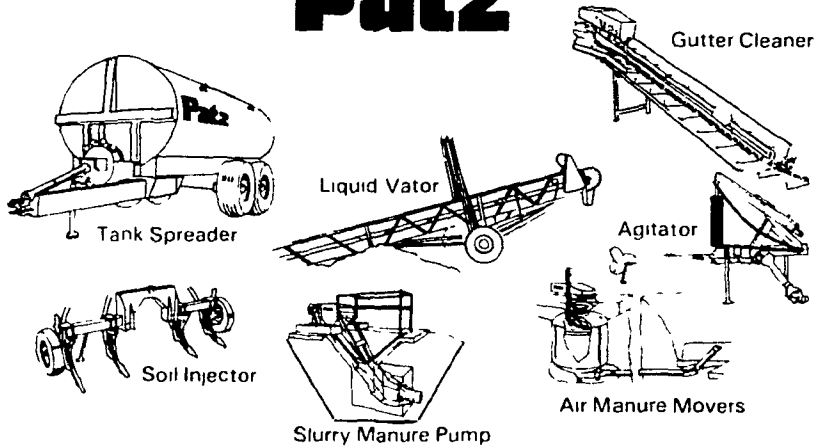
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