



Issue 531: June 2020

How Healthy is Your Soybean Field?

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As we get deeper into the growing season, it's a great time to review some basic reminders for scouting soybeans.

The early portion of the growing season is a good time to pull samples for Soybean Cyst Nematodes (SCN). Following weeds, this little pest is the number one yield robber in Midwest soybean production. Target fields that have struggled to meet your operation's yield average and focus on low yielding areas. A soil probe or spade can be used to get a dozen or so inch wide by seven-inch-deep samples. Send those samples into your local diagnostic lab as soon as possible after sampling. Although resistant varieties and corn rotation largely keep this pest in check, we occasionally need to tweak that program with a different resistance mode of action.

It's important to monitor all fields weekly. UAVs and satellite imagery along with your scouting app in Advantage Acre® make this more feasible than ever before, so you can better triage the fields that are most demanding of your valuable time. Pay special attention to the earliest planted fields, as those fields tend to be most at risk for encountering rough, early-season conditions (i.e. crusting, drowned out spots, etc.). Such fields can also be the focal point for certain pests like bean leaf beetles. Since part of our recent gain in soybean production has stemmed from the yield benefits associated with early planting, watch your fields so you can make an early judgement call. If you end up needing to replant, the sooner you can make that decision, the more you can salvage some of those yield benefits associated with early planting.

When it comes to fertilizer, make sure you keep an eye on fields that have been manured or that have lots of green material incorporated. Manure and green matter can be attractive to the fly species responsible for seed corn maggot. Seed treatments like AgriShield from LG Seeds have substantially reduced issues with this pest, although it still does appear from time to time. To evaluate this, look at the cotyledons. If the pest is there tunneling, the maggots themselves are probably present.

Remember, you only see half the story when you just look above the soil surface. So, while you're in the field, dig up some plants. Do you see evidence of seedling disease? Do you notice any cankers near the soil surface? Factor this information into stand counts so you can make an early call on replant or decide if you need to spruce up the population with an overseed pass.

Finally, don't forget the most severe yield limiting factor we face every year. Survey fields for weeds – do you notice any escapes? Do you notice any unusual species? Take notes and then visit with your LG Seeds STAR Partner. Many of the pests mentioned above can substantially reduce yield, but unchecked weeds carry the power to zero out your hard-earned bushels.

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