

DAVID'S DESK



An update on soybean health issues from David Wright Ph.D., education director of the NCSRP's Plant Health Initiative

The “sentinel plot” program – soybean producers’ early warning system for Asian rust

Controlling Asian soybean rust (ASR) is going to be paramount to profitable soybean production. That’s why the North Central Soybean Research Program (NCSRP) has teamed up with the United Soybean Board (USB) and several federal agencies to create a “sentinel plot” program – an early-detection system for Asian rust.

The system will be up and running this spring, and will allow growers to monitor movement of Asian rust in the United States. It also will provide producers with a window of opportunity to make decisions regarding fungicide applications prior to ASR’s arrival to your own fields.

Early-planted plots, monitored regularly

Developed by X.B. Yang, a plant pathologist at Iowa State, this new checkoff-supported program includes an extensive system of early-planted plots in 20 soybean-producing states, from the deep South to the northern Soybean Belt.

Plots will be located at university research fields or grower fields, planted 15 to 25 days prior to normal planting times, and monitored every three to seven days. If ASR spores are present, disease symptoms will appear in sentinel plots first.

Plot data and risk assessments available online

Trained experts will monitor the sentinel plots and feed information to a centralized USDA database. (Once ASR is identified in a sentinel plot, plant samples will be sent to USDA for immediate verification.) All information on the presence of ASR will be collected in the database, and immediately made available to experts and producers. You’ll be able to access this information on the PHI Web site – www.planthealth.info – as well as link to the USDA Web site. We’ll also use the database to develop state-specific risk assessments, to alert you of the need to spray preventative fungicides.

A broad-based partnership

A project of this scope requires the partnership of USB, USDA-APHIS, USDA-ARS and USDA-CSREES. By working together, pooling checkoff and government resources and expertise, we’re able to increase the number of sentinel plots, and give all soybean producers a better handle on rust if and when it hits.

I’m really excited about this program’s potential to help keep producers a step ahead of ASR, and to help you protect your bottom line. But there is still much to learn. I strongly suggest that you stay on top of ASR and do your research as planting season approaches. For more information, visit www.planthealth.info.



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