


SOYBEAN RESEARCH PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR – KATE BROWN

 Farmer Blog



Kate Brown, Program Associate—Commercial Agriculture, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Burlington County

Why did you decide to pursue a career that includes soybean research?

I was very active in my local FFA chapter growing up, and I went to college to study agricultural education. While in college, I learned about extension and met many farmers. I liked the diversity of combining education, research and helping those farmers, so I decided to pursue a career in extension. I focused on horticultural crops, but New Jersey vegetable farmers are very diverse, often relying on soybeans as a rotational crop. As I have worked with them, I have developed an interest in field crops. Including soybeans in research ultimately serves our farmers better. I have observed that field crop growers are way ahead of the curve in implementing conservation practices like cover crops and no-till, so I am learning from them to better serve diversified farmers.

What research topic have you completed in the past or are working on now that could have or has had the most significant impact on soybean production?

The New Jersey agriculture industry is facing a crisis in farm viability. That is the top concern for our farmers, so any work we do that can improve soybean efficiency and keep them viable, like evaluating the economics of soybean planting populations, will have an impact.

How has the soybean checkoff enhanced your ability to find answers to production problems for farmers?

The New Jersey Soybean Board and the soy checkoff have been critical. We have so few agronomists in New Jersey, and many of them have broad roles. We need the support of the New Jersey Soybean Board to conduct research projects. Their initial seed money is vital to local soybean research.

Within your area of expertise, what are the top two or three general recommendations

you would offer farmers to improve their management practices?

Focus on what you can control, because there are so many factors that can't be controlled. Optimizing planting populations, diversifying operations and crop rotations, and similar practices all help farmers improve risk management.

Within your area of expertise, what do you consider to be critical soybean research needs that can impact the profitability of famers in the future?

Soil health and fertility play a major role in the availability of nutrients, which impacts input needs. I think research on practices like planting green into cover crops and understanding how cover crops work will help farmers show the value they can bring for issues like carbon sequestration, air quality and climate.



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