MARK LICHT – SOYBEAN RESEARCH PROFILE

Farmer Blog



Mark Licht, assistant professor and Extension cropping systems specialist, Iowa State University

Why did you decide to pursue a career that includes soybean research?
I grew up on a corn, soybean, and farrow-to-finish hog farm in north central Iowa. That was a great experience where I learned I definitely did not want to work with hogs and manure. In my bachelor's program, I developed interest in soils and interactions with soybean and corn growth.

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?
Better understanding about how soybean planting and early season decisions affect production is critically important. These decisions can have some significant financial decisions. In the past, this work focused on better understanding of planting date and crop maturity. More recently, research has evolved to evaluate non-traditional practices.

How has the soybean checkoff enhanced your ability to find answers to production problems for farmers?
Soybean checkoff support allows me to conduct research and develop recommendations in collaboration with Extension soybean colleagues from across the country. I am able to provide soybean research opportunities for graduate students as well as Iowa agronomists and farmers.

Within your area of expertise, what are the top two or three general recommendations you would offer farmers to improve their management practices?
It is really important to plan soybean planting timing. But be careful, you can plant too early and lose the benefits from timely planting.

Do not get caught up in applying unneeded nitrogen and other products. This simply bites into your profit potential. If curious, conduct a well designed on-farm trial to learn firsthand what type of yield response, if any, products and practices can return.

Within your area of expertise, what do you consider to be critical soybean research needs that can impact the profitability of farmers in the future?
As a cropping systems specialist, I think the future is to look at how the entire system can be changed to increase soil health and reduce nutrient losses, as well as what we can do with our farming practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In the short-term, this should focus on cover crops and no-tillage practices. A little further out this likely means crop rotation diversity.

SOYBEAN RESEARCH & INFORMATION NETWORK

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