SOYBEAN RESEARCH PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR PROFILE — SHAWN P. CONLEY

Farmer Blog

Shawn P. Conley (Coolbean), University of Wisconsin State Soybean & Small Grains Specialist

Why did you decide to pursue a career that includes soybean research?
My journey into the soybean world has been unique to say the least. I was raised on a dairy farm. We never grew soybeans and to date our family farm still hasn't. In graduate school, I worked in potato during my master's degree and walked into my Ph.D. planning meeting expecting to continue to work on potato. Low and behold four hours later, I emerged with a focus on soybeans. The rest is Coolbean history!

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?
I am fortunate to be involved in many research projects with significant impact on U.S. soybean production. These range from developing an updated national soybean maturity group map, to defining U.S.-scale optimal soybean planting dates and seeding rate recommendations, to quantifying the impact of climate change on U.S. soybean yield and profitability. The most recent and impactful would be the North Central Soybean Research Program (NCSRP)-funded project, Benchmarking Soybean Production Systems in the North Central U.S with co-principal investigator Patricio Grassini from the University of Nebraska. We collected data from more than 8,000 farmers and 600,000 acres across the region. The data set is a researcher's dream!

How has the soybean checkoff enhanced your ability to find answers to production problems for farmers?
I am extremely proud to say, and I announce at all meetings, that my program is primarily funded by U.S. soybean farmers via the soybean checkoff. The Wisconsin Soybean Marketing Board, and more recently the NCSRP, have allowed the University of Wisconsin BeanTeam to develop and communicate unbiased research-based recommendations that

are economically and environmentally sustainable and socially responsible.

Within your area of expertise, what are the top two or three general recommendations you would offer farmers to improve their management practices?
The BeanTeam strives to keep farm gate profitability and ROI foremost in our recommendations. Given today's production challenges, I strongly encourage farmers to take advantage of free yield and plant as early as agronomically feasible (i.e. don't mud it in), start clean and stay clean (i.e. don't let weeds manage you), and fertilize responsibly (i.e. manage P and K levels but don't get sucked into unnecessary foliar feed or nitrogen on soybean fertility programs).

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?
I see the role soybean plays in the nitrogen and carbon cycles as a huge research need in the next decade and beyond. We have been focused on crop-specific contributions to these cycles and lack the interplay of how the corn-soybean system as a whole impacts system dynamics. Critical interplay will be how genetic-by-environment-by-management (GxExM) influences these cycles across the landscape. Our experience to date suggests there is no one size fits all.

SRIN articles:

Healthy Soil, Happy Soybeans: Insights from Multi-State Research

New Decision Tool Helps Farmers with ROI at the Field Level

Optimizing No-Till Soybean Planted into a Cereal Rye Cover Crop

Can Nitrogen Rescue a Flooded Soybean Crop?

Cereal Rye Cover Crop Termination Timing Effects on Soybean Yield Across the Midwest

Double Cropping Soybean Recommendations in Wisconsin

Exploring Desiccant Usage for Better On-Farm Decision Making

New Tool Available to Help in Farm Management Decision Making

Post-Harvest Measurement of Soybean Seed Number and Seed Mass Contributions to Final Seed Yield

Corn–Soybean Planting Order Could Impact Farm Revenue

NCSRP Project Explores Prescriptions for Best Management Practices

Testing the Viability of Double-Cropping and Intercropping of Wisconsin Soybeans

For more articles and projects with **Shawn Conley**, visit www.CoolBeans.info

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