SOYBEAN RESEARCH PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR PROFILE – ANDY KNESS

Farmer Blog

Andy Kness, Agricultural Science Agent, Harford County, University of Maryland

Why did you decide to pursue a career that includes soybean research?
I like helping people and solving problems, and I am doing that as an extension agent in the county where I grew up. Soybeans are the number one or two crop every year in Maryland, so they are an important crop for the area. I am able to explore answers to questions from growers and generate research and information to help them.

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 believe providing an unbiased review of fungicide efficacy supports farmers as they make decisions. Chemical companies continue producing new products. Though my academic research moves more slowly than industry, the trials offer objective data under real-world conditions.

How has the soybean checkoff enhanced your ability to find answers to production problems for farmers?
The soy checkoff is a great source of funds and support for the type of projects I do. The checkoff is designed to address local problems. I appreciate that the Maryland Soybean Board has supported my crazy ideas and provided really good feedback. It's a collaborative effort.

Within your area of expertise, what are the top two or three general recommendations you would offer farmers to improve their management practices?

- *Choose good genetics with good resistance or tolerance to key pests when available. Genetics are the top tool in the toolbox to manage pests, and other tools complement them.*

- *Think about cultural practices like planting date and planting conditions. While planting soybeans early often pays, planting conditions still need to be conducive to germination and emergence. Focus on getting a good soybean stand.*
- *Make sure equipment is functioning well, adjusting settings as needed, from planting through harvest.*

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?
We need research to monitor both pests of all types and modes of action to see resistance trends and address potential problems. Most products today use variations of existing modes of action. It's important to rotate modes of action to avoid resistance development with any key pests, especially because discoveries of new modes of action are rare. We must preserve the tools we have, or we could potentially lose them all.

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SOYBEAN RESEARCH & INFORMATION NETWORK

This website is funded by the soybean checkoff