BEN BEALE – SOYBEAN RESEARCH PROFILE

Farmer Blog



Ben Beale, agriculture and food systems agent, University of Maryland Extension—Southern Maryland Cluster

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

I grew up on a family farm and appreciate the importance of agriculture to our region. Soybeans are a leading agronomic crop in our area. As an Extension agent, I enjoy working with soybean producers to provide them the needed solutions for their problems through on-farm research and our conduit to the land grant system.

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 have conducted research on a variety of topics; however, the most pressing area of concern is herbicide resistance. Weeds such as Palmer amaranth, common ragweed and marestail are a constant challenge. In collaboration with farmers and other Extension professionals around the region, we have developed strategies and better management practices to manage and prevent herbicide-resistant weeds. A significant part of that effort, in addition to applied research trials, is educational outreach focused on integrated weed management.

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

The soybean checkoff provides funding to conduct applied research that is directly applicable to growers. Funding proposals are reviewed by our state board, which is comprised of farmers and soybean stakeholders, resulting in projects that are relevant to their interests and priorities. Furthermore, local checkoff funding often serves as the

precursor for larger funding sources.

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

Herbicide resistance is an issue that will be with us for some time. When dealing with weeds such as Palmer amaranth, either preventing or catching an infestation early is critical. Start clean, use multiple effective residual products at planting, and make timely post applications. If you find Palmer amaranth, isolate that field and remove plants before they produce seeds. Begin exploring and start integrating additional strategies such as cover crops, crop rotation or weed seed destruction into the operation. Always keep learning and stay abreast of new technologies.

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?

The days of relying upon a single mode of action to eliminate weeds are gone. We need to continue to develop new technologies to be used in conjunction with effective herbicides. Areas of interest include integrated weed management strategies, cover cropping systems, use of unmanned aircraft systems vehicles like drones for weed identification, location and herbicide applications and continued evaluation of new herbicide technology.

SOYBEAN RESEARCH & INFORMATION NETWORK

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