SOYBEAN RESEARCH PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR PROFILE – BOB KEMERAIT

Farmer Blog

Bob Kemerait, Professor and Extension Specialist, Department of Plant Pathology, University of Georgia

Why did you decide to pursue a career that includes soybean research?
I am fascinated by plant diseases, and I enjoy plant pathology work. I focused on other crops, but Asian soybean rust brought me into soybeans. Prior to its appearance in the U.S., soybean diseases weren't a focus for our farmers. Now, I count the many connections I've made within soybean disease research as good friends, and I have the opportunity to help soybean farmers protect their yield and profitability.

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?
In addition to studying and monitoring Asian soybean rust, I am participating in work to re-evaluate the challenge of soybean cyst nematode with The SCN Coalition. Research to understand and manage these threats helps farmers improve soybean production.

How has the soybean checkoff enhanced your ability to find answers to production problems for farmers?
Without funding, it isn't possible to do this work. Georgia farmers fund my work with between a nickel and a dime per acre. In a year with a low threat of Asian soybean rust, they can save $10 to $15 per acre by not spraying a fungicide. When the disease is prevalent, a timely spray can save 25 to 40 bushels per acre in yield. Funding the sentinel plot system either saves them money on spraying or protects yield, and both support their profitability.

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

- *Soybean farmers need to recognize potential nematode problems and use resistant*

genetics and nematicides to manage them.

- *Most soybeans in our region benefit from timely fungicide applications, so plan for that application to help them get to their yield potential and to protect profitability.*

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 to invest in fungicide resistance research to be ahead of the curve in resistant management for diseases.*
- *We've made tremendous progress in breeding efforts for disease and nematode resistance, but more research and progress will be needed.*
- *Integrated pest management research helps farmers learn to use soybean varieties, cultural practices and fungicides for disease and nematode management.*

SRIN articles:

Sentinel Plots Keep Watch for Diseases

SOYBEAN RESEARCH & INFORMATION NETWORK

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