

SOYBEAN RESEARCH PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR PROFILE – HORACIO LOPEZ-NICORA

... Farmer Blog



Horacio Lopez-Nicora, Assistant Professor, Soybean Pathology and Nematology, Ohio State University

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

I grew up in agriculture, primarily raising cattle and riding horses in Paraguay, South America. I was intrigued that we could produce feed for the cattle, which included soybeans. I am fascinated by how resilient soybeans are as a crop, though many pathogens threaten them. I'm also fascinated by the ways pathogens can damage soybeans. I have learned that with accurate knowledge of pathogens and environmental conditions, we can figure out how to make adjustments to help the crop and protect yield.

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?

Raising awareness and understanding of soybean cyst nematodes with farmers is making the biggest impact on soybean production. Farmers are being convinced of the need to manage SCN through their own sampling data and understanding that yield loss is possible even with no visible symptoms. And the same is true for the entire industry. Once everyone on the team understands a problem, we can work together to successfully address it.

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

Without soy checkoff support, my team would not be able to do our research. I also believe it's very valuable that growers review our research proposals, so that we know we are asking relevant questions. That makes it more likely that farmers in general will be able to use our research results to address problems.

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

In the field, myriad components both enhance and reduce crop yield, productivity and sustainability, and those factors change constantly. Multiple pathogens are always present, and they interact with abiotic factors, especially the weather. Because of this, farmers should be curious about their crop, constantly asking questions. They need to use the network of information available from the experts around them, including those from land grant universities and other partners. They should connect all that information to manage the health of their crop, much as we holistically manage our personal health.

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?

We understand individual soybean pathogens well, but as a former president of the American Phytopathological Society said, nature doesn't work with pure cultures. We need research to understand the interactions between pathogens. Some situations likely favor different pathogens over others, while other situations may create synergies that can cause bigger problems for crops. Understanding interactions will help us better protect crop growth and yield potential.



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