LEAH MCHALE – SOYBEAN RESEARCH PROFILE

Farmer Blog

Leah McHale, soybean breeding and genetics associate professor, The Ohio State University Department of Horticulture and Crop Science

Why did you decide to pursue a career that includes soybean research?
At one point, I wanted to pursue a career in molecular biology of animal systems, but an internship while I was an undergrad at Penn State University convinced me otherwise. I strongly encourage my student advisees or mentees to pursue work experiences early and often. It's just as important to know which career choices are a poor fit as it is to know which are a good fit!

During my undergraduate education, I also had research experiences in a plant pathology lab and a plant breeding group. That led me to an interest in the genetics of disease resistance, which I pursued in my PhD studies. When this position at Ohio State arose, the opportunity to stay in academia, but breed a major crop like soybeans was very enticing.

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 lead a group of public soybean breeders and researchers from across the North Central U.S. working to develop tools and test methods to develop better soybeans, faster. This important work is enabled by support from the North Central Soybean Research Program (NCSRP).

How has the soybean checkoff enhanced your ability to find answers to production problems for farmers?
My breeding and research program is primarily funded by U.S. farmers through the soybean

checkoff. Support from the Ohio Soybean Council and United Soybean Board have enabled our variety release and the long-term objectives of our breeding program. As mentioned above, NCSRP has provided support for public soybean breeders across the North Central U.S. to develop tools and share resources, so that we can improve breeding methods for soybeans.

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?
Development of not only higher yielding, but also soybeans with higher seed quality in terms of oil and meal production will position U.S. soybean well in the global market. This will ultimately improve profitability for our farmers.

SRIN articles:

Breeders Continue to Improve Tools for Soybean Genetic Gain

SOYBEAN RESEARCH & INFORMATION NETWORK

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