

SOYBEAN RESEARCH PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR PROFILE – MIKE CASTELLANO

... Farmer Blog



Mike Castellano, professor, Department of Agronomy, Iowa State University

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

My background is in environmental science. As I learned more about the field, I determined that working with the crops that feed the world, including soybeans and corn, would be the best way to make an impact. As a researcher, I study the whole system, and in this area, that means looking at how soybeans and corn work together.

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 been researching soybean and corn production systems in Iowa for more than 13 years. During that time, I am most excited that my research has not been a series of one-off projects. Instead, I am deepening and broadening our understanding of the whole crop system to constantly improve its efficiency.

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

If soybean farmers find a problem that they want a solution for, the research to find that solution will be funded. That's resulted in quite a bit of research over the years that is meaningful to farmers, rather than research that is intriguing to scientists. The soy checkoff makes sure research remains relevant to farmers.

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

Farmers should think about managing their entire system, rather than individual crops or targeted goals. Within their system, they should work to minimize tradeoffs as they introduce new solutions to that system, to improve overall efficiency.

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 need research focused on long-term sustainability, especially as soybeans find a growing role in renewable diesel and other fuels. Such focus will ensure that this cropping system continues to be the most productive and environmentally efficient in the world.

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