# TERRY SPURLOCK – SOYBEAN RESEARCH PROFILE

Farmer Blog



Terry Spurlock, Professor of Plant Pathology, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture

**Why did you decide to pursue a career that includes soybean research?**
*I grew up as a golfer. I loved grass and soil science and planned to become a turf pathologist. But during my education, I learned that while turfgrass is beautiful and golf is fun, soybeans feed people. Soybeans are a very important global crop. I decided I wanted a career that results in producers feeding more people, and so I switched my focus from turfgrass to soybeans and other crops.*

**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 think my ongoing research on taproot decline, a relatively new disease that seems to be spreading in soybean fields, will have a significant impact on soybean production. I also believe the research I am doing on the economics of foliar fungicide application can be critical for producer profitability, protecting against diseases and protecting fungicide technology from the development of resistant pathogen populations.*

**How has the soybean checkoff enhanced your ability to find answers to production problems for farmers?**
*We would not have anywhere near the answers we provide producers without checkoff programs. The amount of work we've been able to do across disciplines has greatly improved row crop production.*

**Within your area of expertise, what are the top two or three general recommendations you would offer farmers to improve their management practices?**
*To use a golf metaphor, it's not just how good your good shots are, it's how good your bad shots are. Disease management is about fundamentals. In farming, those fundamentals include:*

- *Scouting. There's no substitute for time in the field.*
- *Integrated pest management. Address problems with all available tools, like variety selection, tillage, crop rotation and pesticide application.*
- *Timely and adequate irrigation. At times, overirrigation can create disease issues.*
- *Variety selection. Choose proven, high-yielding, disease-tolerant varieties then available.*

*These fundamentals are data driven. I encourage producers to look at the data and be conservative, rather than choosing to add practices because they are new and exciting. It is too easy to spend money on inputs that do not add value to the crop.*

**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?**
*I believe that variety testing should be at the center of future research. Robust field trials and variety testing will advance breeding. Regional investments will help farmers address current and future problems in their fields. With more options available, farmers will be able to plant high-yielding, disease-tolerant soybean varieties more often.*

**SRIN Articles:**

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