Checking For Soybean Cyst Nematode Can Increase Yield 30 Percent

SPRINGFIELD, MO.

For most area farmers, soybean yields were better than average this year according to Jay Chism, an agronomy specialist with University of Missouri Extension in Lamar.

But what if yields could be 30 percent higher? Research has shown that a yield loss of 30 percent is possible without any visual symptoms when soybean cyst nematode (SCN) is present.

"Many times reduced yields are the only indication of SCN," said Chism.

Soybean cyst nematode is a microscopic parasite that penetrates soybean roots. Plant damage is primarily due to the feeding of the female nematode.

Plants infected with high numbers of SCN have poor root systems that cannot efficiently use soil nutrients and water. The result may be stunted plants and, sometimes, yellow leaves. Yields are low because fewer pods develop on infected plants.

"The 'take home' message is that growers need to take a soil sample for SCN," said Chism. "Unlike other diseases and insects, the level of damage or yield loss that will occur in a field due to soybean cyst nematode can be predicted with a $15 SCN egg count."

According to Chism, if the egg count does come back high it is important that soybean producers manage to begin reducing the egg numbers.

"SCN is very difficult to manage. SCN can be suppressed but not eliminated," said Chism. "In fact, the nematode can live in the soil under adverse conditions (inside a cyst) for many years."

Although many soybean varieties have resistance to SCN, resistance is not complete. Chism says that because of its adaptability, SCN can actually build up on previously resistant varieties.

For information on how to take samples from soybean fields for SCN and how to manage SCN, call Chism at the Barton County Extension Office, (417) 682- 3579. The MU Extension Guide Sheet G4450 "Soybean cyst nematode" is also online at http://extension.missouri.edu/Barton/. Δ