

Know Your Herbicides

Farmers Who Do Their Herbicide Homework Can Reap Rewards

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The right herbicides at the right time can mean as much as \$30 an acre in your pocket, according to Bryan Young of Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. He spoke about enhanced herbicide control at a recent meeting in Belleville.

Young discussed herbicide programs in soybeans that can lead to better weed management and higher yields. He said it's important to use the right herbicide and not run up an excessive herbicide bill by choosing the wrong one.

Previously the questions were "what glyphosate are you going to use?" and "how do you time it so you just need one, maybe two applications during the growing season?"

"The common practice was to time the last glyphosate application until shortly prior to canopy closure in soybeans, and then you're going to be good for the rest of the year," he said. "That was the biggest management decision."

Today the question is whether glyphosate is going to control those big weeds, and if not, what else should be done to manage these weeds.

"So we're using tank mix partners in many cases to protect the yield," Young said. "We're also using soil residual herbicides. In some geographies, what we call the set up rate or foundation rate of residual herbicides is being used and has proven effective. In other areas where glyphosate is not effective or you have glyphosate-resistant waterhemp infestations, you have to use more than just a foundation rate. You might have to use a full residual rate and that's going to cost a little more money, so you better make sure you're using the right one; because if you don't use the right one that means you might have to use another tank mix partner with your glyphosate and then your herbicide bill starts going up."

The right herbicide is needed to (A) protect yields, gain control of some of the weeds that glyphosate is either inconsistent on or they're just resistant to glyphosate and that should keep that herbicide bill at a minimum.

"Once you start with rescue applications to control problem weeds that you didn't realize earlier, you have to go to plan B," he said. "Then your herbicide bill starts to go up and it can be fairly significant in some cases."

Southern Illinois farmers mainly get assistance from their crop input retailer or crop specialists. Crop consultants are used to a limited extent, and the individuals in the retail system act as if they are crop consultants, though, obviously, they're selling the chemistry as well. The use of crop consultants is not as prominent here as some other areas throughout the United States.

"It certainly requires a good relationship between you and whoever is selling you your herbicide input," Young said. "Be sure that you have the good technical information. So as we move out of managing weeds with just glyphosate, the number one hurdle is proper application timing. Even on some glyphosate resistant weeds you can increase the level of control a little bit by just spraying when they're much smaller in size and that size would be probably less than four inches. That's really what we're targeting, whether that's glyphosate or any other tank mix partner with glyphosate. We don't want big weeds."

So, to make sure you're making a timely application, the effort should be to use a good residual herbicide and start clean. Farmers need to consider whether they are going to get by with a set up (foundation) rate of a residual herbicide or if they need a full residual herbicide rate.

"For a better chance to make a timely application, use a full residual herbicide rate, especially if the residual herbicide is being applied several weeks ahead of planting," Young said. "You know as luck would have it, maybe you don't need a post application at all if it works too good. I don't think that would be a problem for most growers."

"You might spend \$10 more on your herbicide program, or in some cases you might be approaching well over \$30 an acre in soybean, if your planned postemergence herbicides fail," he said.

Considering \$3 an acre with glyphosate it may seem far fetched that the program could cost

"The right herbicides at the right time".
Bryan Young of Southern Illinois University,
Carbondale, discusses how this can mean
an extra \$30 an acre. Photo by John LaRose



\$30. But if it isn't addressed appropriately, it can.

"Using the right herbicides at the right time is a must. You know if you apply it on weeds that are larger than four inches you might have to come back again with another expensive herbicide."

The difference in making the right herbicide selection and applying it at the right time versus being responsive by trying to force the glyphosate only system can be expensive.

"Failing to become educated on the best herbicide options might mean \$10-\$15 in weed control costs that weren't necessary," he summed. "You might have reduced yields and a larger herbicide bill than somebody that used the right herbicides from the start. They'll have higher yields and maybe a lower herbicide bill, so there's justification to be well educated on what herbicides are best for your program these days." Δ

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