

Louisiana Soybean Acres Expected To Increase

BATON ROUGE, LA.

Louisiana will likely have a large soybean crop this year, according to experts with the LSU AgCenter.

LSU AgCenter soybean specialist Dr. Ronnie Levy is expecting as much as 1.2 million acres. While mid- to late April is the optimum time to plant soybeans, weather has delayed some farmers, he said.

"We would have liked to have planted soybeans earlier," Levy said. "There were a few planted earlier, but the weather conditions – the pattern of rain, then cold weather – kept many growers from having the window to get in and plant early soybeans."

Last week's weather (April 20) has been cooperative, and farmers are getting their soybean seeds in the ground, he said. Farmers can plant soybeans into June, but the later they plant, the lower their yield potential.

"We have more disease and insect problems later in the season, which can affect yields," Levy said.

Instead of growing corn, cotton or grain sorghum, many farmers are opting for soybeans because fuel and fertilizer costs have gone down slightly and soybean prices are favorable, the LSU AgCenter soybean specialist said.

"We've seen a lot of soybeans being exported, and this has driven the market to where there is a bright spot, and prices could continue to go up, especially with the demand for soybeans," Levy explained.

Soybean growers will be on the lookout for dis-

eases and insects. One disease – Asian soybean rust – has been a concern for the state's soybean industry over the past few years.

At the LSU AgCenter's Dean Lee Research Station near Alexandria and in other fields across the state, researchers have planted sentinel plots to guard against diseases.

"What we do is plant the sentinel plot to basically look at soybeans real early to be an indicator of when that disease comes into the field," Levy said.

If diseases show up in the plots, the LSU AgCenter can alert growers to make the proper fungicide applications.

Even though Asian soybean rust has been in Louisiana for several years, Levy said, timely fungicide applications have kept the disease from causing significant damage. The disease fortunately has appeared late in the growing season when potential harm has been low.

"If it comes in and starts infesting the soybean plants during the peak production period, then it would have a devastating affect on yields," Levy said.

Growers also need to watch for the red-banded stink bug, which has caused problems in soybeans in recent years. Levy said green and brown stink bugs used to be more common in the field, but now the majority of stink bugs are the red-banded variety.

"It seems to cause more damage, bigger impacts on yields and quality and requires more applications of insecticides," Levy said.

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