

Non-Glyphosate Varieties Increase In MU Soybean Trials

COLUMBIA, MO.

A spike in traditional soybean varieties could be signaling a sea change in the seed industry. The University of Missouri Variety Testing Program saw a significant increase in non-glyphosate-resistant varieties in 2009, amounting to almost 15 percent of total entries.

"This is the biggest jump we've seen," said Howard Mason, MU plant sciences research associate. "The number of non-glyphosate varieties dropped most of the past decade, starting at 34 percent in 2000 and falling to a low of 1 percent in 2006."

Companies entered 61 non-glyphosate varieties and 353 Roundup-ready varieties last year as the program continued to see overall growth in participation. Howard said the shift in entries comes as farmers cope with growing weed resistance to glyphosate and high technology fees associated with Roundup-ready seed.

"There's been a little antagonism toward Monsanto, so some companies have tried to push the non-glyphosate varieties and some elevators have started paying a premium of a couple dollars a bushel for them," Mason said. "Along with seed prices being way less for non-glyphosate varieties, and despite herbicide costs being more expensive, some farmers have begun to rethink what they plant."

MU's testing program began in 1973 with only 51 varieties. The program, funded by a \$100 fee for each entry, strives to provide unbiased information for farmers to compare varieties.

Test results for 2009 are available online at <http://varietytesting.missouri.edu/soybean/>.

Downloadable reports show yield data from 20 sites across Missouri. Sites are grouped by region—North, Central, Southwest and Southeast. A head-to-head comparison tool also allows farmers to compare the yields of any two varieties.

Farmers can use results to decide on the right variety for their particular climate, soil type and disease problems.

"You shouldn't just pick the top-yielding variety without looking closer to consider soil type and traits that might lend themselves better to your farm," Mason said.

Mason recommends looking up the varieties with the highest mean yield in your region (these are designated with "*" or "***"). Then look up the results for the test site closest to your farm and choose a variety that ranks high for both that site and the region as a whole.

A list of characteristics of all varieties, from disease resistance to seed treatments, can also be found in with this year's results.

With careful planning, farmers can use this data to choose a variety that could make all the difference in the combine hopper next fall.

Mason explained that in 2008 there was an 8.2-bushel difference between the top variety of soybeans and the mean average of the pack in its 63 experiments.

"Variety selection is probably the easiest and cheapest decision farmers can make to increase their harvest size," he said. "If just choosing the right variety can increase your yield by eight bushels, it's easy to see that it's something farmers should pay more attention to." Δ



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