

Pioneer Talks Crops

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Crops in the upper mid-South have improved quite a bit from a month ago. The region now has double-crop soybeans planted, and maybe growers can finally catch their breath. The corn crop is at varied stages of development, but experts think the majority of the corn crop is now pollinating or already has pollinated and is grain-filling. It is important for growers to keep a watch on soybean and corn crops for insects and diseases from this point on.

Soybean fungicide applications have been increasing steadily. Many growers are curious about the proper timing for applications. University and private company research data clearly indicates applying foliar fungicides at R3 growth stage most likely will provide the greatest potential for an economic yield response. The R3 growth stage occurs when there is a pod 3/16-inch long on any one of the uppermost four nodes on the main stem with a fully developed leaf. Many agronomists recommend applying a labeled insecticide with this fungicide application to control any insects that may be in the fields, especially if the field is not scouted. Sometimes the insecticide will offer just as much or more yield protection as the fungicide. However, scouted fields will offer the grower better information to make decisions. Defoliation levels of 20 to 25 percent or greater during flowering and

15 to 20 percent or more during pod fill may warrant treatment. Also, growers should scout for stink bugs and other pod-feeding insects. Field borders may need to be sprayed for blister beetles, Japanese beetles or grasshoppers to reduce damage.

The mid-South was hit hard in the later part of June with August-like temperatures. When temperatures reach 95-plus degrees in the daytime with high nighttime temperatures, it is important for growers to keep up with irrigation. Even at the dough stage of development, the corn crop still uses 0.25 inches of water per day. The usage diminishes from there, but at full dent the crop still will require 0.1 inches per day. So it is very important for growers not to terminate irrigation too soon. A common myth

of corn production is that the crop is made after the kernels reach the dent stage. The fact is, potential yield at the dent stage is only 75 percent complete.

Kernels will continue to accumulate weight until the black layer stage (physiological maturity) is reached. This yield potential between dent stage and black layer will more than justify the cost of continuing irrigation. Growers shouldn't leave money on the table by terminating irrigation too soon. Black layer can be identified by scraping the surface layer off the base of the kernel on the flat side opposite the germ. The kernels on the end of the ear will reach black layer last. Black layer typically occurs three weeks after full dent. Δ

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