

Pioneer Talks Crops

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Crops in the upper mid-South are progressing at a fast pace. We have experienced numerous sunny days and are accumulating growing degree units very rapidly compared to the last few years. Double-crop soybeans are planted so maybe we can finally catch our breath a little.

The corn crop is in grain fill, and it won't be long until combines are in the field. A much-needed rain swept through the area during the second weekend in July, so we are looking for the soybean crop to improve.

The recent dry weather provoked insects to look for green soybean fields. Be sure to look for insects while considering fungicide applications on soybeans. I always 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 growers better information when making their 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.

In May and June the Mid-South region experienced August-like temperatures and lit-

tle rainfall. When temperatures reach 95+ F in the daytime accompanied by high nighttime temperatures, it is important to keep up with irrigation. Even at the dough stage of development, the corn crop uses 0.25 inches of water per day. Usage diminishes from there, but at full dent the crop still will require 0.1 inches per day, so it is very important not to terminate irrigation too soon.

A common myth of corn production is that the crop is made after 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. Don't leave money on the table by



terminating irrigation too soon. Black layer can be identified by scraping the surface layer off the tip of the kernel. The kernels on the butt of the ear will reach black layer last. Black layer typically occurs three weeks after full dent. A quicker method to determine irrigation termination is to break the ear in half and look at the ear tip half of the ear for the milkline. If the milkline is three-fourths of the way down the kernels, it would be wise to irrigate one last time for maximum yields. Δ

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