

The Best Kept Secret For Soybean Profitability

ROBERT BELLM

EDWARDSVILLE, ILL.



One of the best kept secrets for increasing soybean production profitability is an online information database maintained by the National Soybean Research Laboratory at University of Illinois. The Varietal Information Program for Soybeans (VIPS) database contains

eight years of data on soybean yields, disease and insect resistance ratings, protein and oil content for almost all of the soybean varieties that have been entered in the University's variety testing program.

This database is accessible to anyone with a computer and an Internet connection, and allows you to search out specific information and make comparisons by year, company, trial location, variety, maturity group, disease resistance rating, or quality attribute. Users can choose "quick search" options that allow you to look at all varieties from a specific company, test location, or year. A more powerful tool gives you the option to create custom searches on specific varieties and traits that may be of interest. Once the information you need has been located, it can be printed out or downloaded as a spreadsheet for even more detailed analysis.

How might this information be used to increase profitability? An obvious answer is that it can help you to choose the highest yielding varieties to plant. If you compare the average

yields of the top 25 percent of varieties tested to the average yields of the bottom 25 percent tested, there is more than 20 bushels per acre difference over all test locations and years. If all growers in the state were to choose varieties from that top 25 percent exclusively, it would have an immediate and major impact on statewide average soybean yields with little, if any, additional cost or change in management!

Are specific diseases such as brown stem rot, sudden death syndrome, soybean cyst nematode or frogeye leaf spot causing you problems? Again, you can create custom searches to find the highest yielding varieties with the greatest resistance to your specific problem. Are you looking for protein and oil characteristics to meet the needs of specialty contracts? The information can be found there. Are you interested in how varieties compare in neighboring states? The site also contains links that will take you to the variety testing information compiled by universities in our neighboring states.

Support funding for the VIPS database is provided by the Illinois Soybean Association through your grower check-off dollars. This database continues to grow and improve over time, and user comments to improve the site's flexibility and ease of use are welcome and encouraged. If soybean profitability is your goal, log on at <http://web.aces.uiuc.edu/VIPS/> to see the wealth of information available to you.

△

Robert Bellm is Extension Educator, Crop Systems, with the University of Illinois at the Edwardsville Extension Center.