

# Tips For Choosing New Crop Production Inputs

LEXINGTON, KY.

Each year many new non-traditional crop and soil inputs are released into the market by companies with the hopes of attracting more business from farmers. With so many choices and claims, it can be difficult for growers to determine which, if any, is going to be effective in their particular crop situation.

Greg Schwab, extension soil management specialist in the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, said farmers should look for certain indicators to help them determine which product is the best fit.

“In this time of slim margins, it doesn’t make sense or cents to use a product that has little chance to increase profitability,” he said.

One of the indicators growers should look for is information on the studies that prove the product’s effectiveness. Schwab said, typically, the most effective products will be tested by universities, which conduct nonbiased studies. These studies should be repeated over several years.

“The university studies should be able to show some measure of statistical difference that traces the improvements directly back to use of the product,” he said.

Growers should also consider the location of the studies when making a decision because different areas of the country have different soil properties. This means results will vary in other states or regions, and not all of the products will

be applicable to Kentucky soils.

“For example, if there’s a product that is designed to reduce sodium levels in the soil, it may be good in California, where levels are high. But in Kentucky, our sodium levels are naturally low so it most likely would not have any effect on crops here,” he said.

University of Kentucky soil scientists test the effectiveness of several new and improved products each year. However, due to the high number of new products that come on the market, there’s no way for all products to be tested by UK specialists.

However, in addition to UK studies, there are other avenues farmers can explore to get solid, research-based information to aid in the decision-making process. One of them is a searchable database that was developed by agronomists in the North Central Region, of which

Kentucky is a member. It contains university results from throughout the region on hundreds of new products. It can be accessed at <http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/compendium/index.aspx>.

County offices of the UK Cooperative Extension Service also have educational fact sheets on new products that have been proven to be effective. These fact sheets list the growing conditions where the product is mostly to produce the best results. Δ



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