

# ASA wants checkoff probe

By LON TONNESON

**T**HE soybean checkoff helped sell more than 3 billion bushels of soybeans in 2008.

But the American Soybean Association charges that some of your checkoff money is being wasted and used illegally.

ASA, which has about 22,000 dues paying members nationwide, has asked the USDA Office of the Inspector General to investigate.

The United Soybean Board manages the soybean checkoff, which totaled approximately \$140 million from 600,000 farmers in 2008.

In a statement, USB said that ASA's allegations are "categorically untrue."

## ASA charges

ASA says that USB has:

- exceeded salary and administrative spending caps of 1% and 5% respectively for the checkoff collected.

- used checkoff funds to lobby Congress and the administration. The checkoff order stipulates that checkoff funds can only be used for market development and research.

## Key Points

- ASA says USB is mismanaging soybean checkoff.

- ASA is asking USDA inspector general to investigate.

- USB says allegations are "categorically untrue."

- failed to conduct "full and complete" investigations of whistleblowers' complaints. Employees allege no-bid contracts were awarded; that wasteful, fraudulent feeding trials were funded; and that improper employee behavior was ignored.

- used "coercive and bullying tactics" to silence criticism from state soybean organizations.

- spent too much on self-promotion, self-serving surveys and "back sell" activities to growers.

## USB's position

ASA's allegations are unfounded, says Chuck Myers, USB chairman and Lyons, Neb., soybean grower.

He says the checkoff is being managed properly. He points to increased demand for soybeans



worldwide and the crop's profit potential as evidence of USB's effectiveness.

At press time, a spokesman

for the Office of Inspector General said that senior officials were assessing the request for an investigation.

## They said it

"Whenever you are on any board — school, church or community — there will always people who think it should have been done differently ...

but, overall, the checkoff is sound and well-managed ... absolutely."

— **Bob Metz, West Browns Valley, S.D.,** former American Soybean Association president, who was recently elected to his first term on the United Soybean Board.



"When allegations of fiscal mismanagement and unethical conduct surfaced, it was ASA's responsibility

to look into it ... I support the checkoff, and I want to see that the checkoff is run as ethically and responsibly as possible." — **Richard Ostlie, Northwood, N.D.,** immediate past chairman of the American Soybean Association.

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