

Rust not soybeans' only nemesis

H IRED at the University of Georgia to study disease management of peanuts and cotton, I vividly remember the afternoon in 2001 when I inherited responsibility for soybeans. With the departure of a colleague to the USDA, soybeans were now an orphaned crop in our department. Knowing that "not much happens in the soybean disease world," I readily agreed to add it to my list of responsibilities.

Despite warnings for several years that the arrival of Asian soybean rust was imminent, it wasn't until 2004 that the disease finally was found in the United States. Since November 2004, our soybean industry has been fully focused on the study, detection and management of rust, a disease of tremendous importance to American producers. However, despite the potential of this disease to cause large losses, soybean producers in the southeastern United States cannot afford to lose focus on other more familiar diseases and ailments of the soybean crop.

Respect all soybean diseases

Frog-eye leaf spot, downy mildew, anthracnose, red crown rot, rhizoctonia blight, white mold, rootknot nematodes and reniform nematodes are but a few of the maladies that can affect soybeans in the Southeast. Producers must respect these pests for two important reasons. First, these pathogens and parasites steal yield and quality from the soybean crop. Second, and more importantly, soybeans in rotation with peanuts and/or cotton have the potential to maintain



From the Turnrow

By BOB KEMERAIT

Key Points

- Consider yield potential and cost of spray before deciding to apply fungicide.
- Check the label. Fungicides are not a one-spray-fits-all for soybean diseases.
- Treating for rust can bump up yield by helping control other diseases.

damaging populations of pathogens that attack not only the beans, but also the other crops as well. In planning their crop rotation, soybean growers need to recognize that the biggest cost of diseases in soybeans may not actually be on the soybean crop, but on the crop that follows the soybeans.

Fungicides are not new to soybean growers. Prior to rust, growers were applying products such as Bravo, Echo, Topsin and Quadris to control common diseases. Today, Headline fungicide also is labeled for management of multiple soybean diseases.

While we know that soybean rust is a disease that must be dealt with aggressively, other fungal diseases of soybeans require careful considerations before the grower "pulls the trigger" for a fungicide application. For example, though frog-eye leaf spot is a common disease, we in the Extension service consider not only the disease, but also the yield

potential in a field and current weather conditions before recommending a fungicide spray. Likewise, though a disease like downy mildew may cause concern to growers, we currently have no recommendation to treat it with fungicides as it appears to have low impact on yield.

Use appropriate fungicides

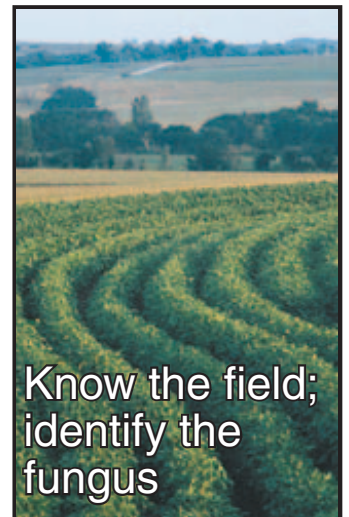
If growers are specifically treating for a disease other than rust, they should use a fungicide labeled for that disease. Although fungicides with Section 18 labels for soybean rust may be effective on other diseases as well, such information has not been fully developed in the United States.

Fungicides applied to control fungal diseases of soybeans, including rust, are typically initiated as early as first bloom, though the exact timing depends on the crop and the weather patterns.

Growers who have had a problem with a disease like frog-eye leaf spot in the past may want to time a preventative fungicide application when they are applying dimilin or boron to the field as the "trip" already is being made.

Growers in the Southeast very likely will need to apply fungicides for management of soybean rust in 2006. As of early February, we already knew that soybean rust had survived on kudzu in multiple locations in Florida and Georgia. Growers should also recognize that treating soybeans for rust will help control other diseases as well, perhaps providing an added bump in yield.

Kemeraйт is an Extension pathologist for the University of Georgia.



Know the field; identify the fungus

S OYBEAN growers in the Southeast need to ask themselves two questions when deciding on the treatment of a fungal soybean disease in the absence of rust.

1. What disease is present? Some diseases, like downy mildew, do not warrant treatment with a fungicide, while other diseases, such as frog-eye leaf spot and anthracnose, might.

2. What is the yield potential in the field? If yield potential is limited by factors such as drought, using fungicides may not be cost effective.



Crisis clutches the nation's wheat industry

By LON TONNISON

T HE U.S. wheat industry faces a crisis, say National Association of Wheat Growers leaders.

Farmers are replacing so many wheat acres with more profitable, less risky crops — particularly corn and soybeans in the Great Plains and Midwest — that the future of the industry is at risk.

"We could eventually lose so many acres that the U.S. could lose markets and its standing as a reliable supplier,"

Key Points

- The wheat industry is losing acres to other crops at an alarming rate.
- Increased yields and reduced risks haven't kept up with corn and soybeans.
- If trend continues, United States could lose reputation as reliable wheat supplier.

said Dale Schuler, NAWG's new president.

Former NAWG president Sherman

Reese said, "If something doesn't change, I am afraid that wheat could go the way of oats and barley in this country."

The two men made these statements at the recent North American Grain Congress in San Antonio.

A perfect storm seems to be threatening the nation's wheat industry. Faced with apparent consumer and miller opposition to genetic modification of wheat, the industry hasn't supported biotechnology research to aid development of new varieties. Many believe new genetically modified varieties could have significantly increased yields and/or lowered costs. As a result, wheat yields have fallen behind other crops that compete for farmers' resources.

Energy costs have skyrocketed, too, raising input prices for many producers by \$20 per acre for 2006. For some growers, that's all of their profit.

"I have a 4-cent-per-bushel profit right now," Schuler said. "If I have a production hiccup, I'll lose money."

Like other farmers, wheat growers face proposed cuts in farm-program payments. However, wheat growers may face the steepest cuts because in the past they have received a higher percentage of direct payments than producers of other crops.

Rail rates continue to hamper the industry, too, said Neal Fisher, administrator of the North Dakota Wheat Commission. Grain elevators in most wheat-producing regions are captive shippers, with access to only one railroad. The monopoly has led to poor service and high shipping rates.

Higher wheat prices could improve the outlook for many wheat growers this year, but in the long term the industry must find a way to increase the profitability and reduce the risk of wheat relative to other crops.

"We have faced challenges in the past," Schuler said, "but this year is different. There is a real sense of urgency."

Tonnison is a Farm Progress editor.



DALE SCHULER



SHERMAN REESE



NEAL FISHER