

Best Practices

CSREES Impact Statement from 07 Report of Accomplishments

Title: *UA Division of Agriculture Asian Soybean Rust Taskforce Reduces Fungicide Costs for Producers*

Issue

Since November 2004, when the exotic disease Asian soybean rust first invaded the continental United States, growers have prepared for, and feared its impact. The basis for fear has been the experience of growers in Brazil and South Africa, where conditions for disease development are near perfect for widespread damage. The devastation in these countries has been heavily hyped by agricultural news media and fungicide companies.

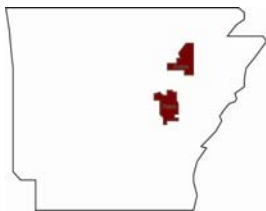


What has been done

Arkansas and other states responded to the invasion by establishing the Soybean Rust Task Force, currently led by Dr. Scott Monfort. An extensive monitoring effort began with the training of more than 600 First Detectors in 2005. Monitoring relies on geographically positioned soybean and kudzu sentinel plots and these plots were sampled weekly or bi-weekly from March thru October by first detectors. Monitoring also relied on the services of the Arkansas Plant Health Clinic and its diagnostic capabilities to correctly detect and identify the subtle symptoms or signs of the disease.

Results

In early September, however, the disease was detected in the western Arkansas River Valley and in sentinel plots in Jackson County of the Arkansas Delta. A brief panic engulfed growers in the Delta, but was quickly squelched by publicity and educational efforts of the Task Force and local county agents. The disease developed rapidly in the Delta and the Soybean Task Force and county agents held meetings, field trainings, answered thousands of phone calls and issued newsletters to help growers manage the situation. Growers were advised to spray only late-planted fields which were still in a susceptible growth stage. Most growers did not panic and followed this advice. In Prairie County, for example, one of the largest soybean producing areas, only 5000 acres were treated in response to the soybean rust scare, out of 35,000 acres that growers initially indicated they would treat. This saved about \$600,000 in fungicide costs that would otherwise have been wasted. Other counties in the Delta reported similar results and while 200,000 acres of the 3,000,000 planted acres in the region were eventually treated, this was a far cry from what could have been if panic spraying had been allowed to happen.



University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture, County Governments Cooperating

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