

HAVE YOU ORDERED YOUR SOYABEAN SEED FOR THE 2010/2011 SEASON?

Although the 2009/2010 soybean crop has not yet been harvested, the season is rapidly drawing to a close and producers should be starting to place their orders for seed next season's crop.

There are many considerations that should be taken into account when choosing which seed to plant.

CULTIVAR CHOICE

Although yield is often considered one of the most important factors regarding the choice of cultivar to be planted, disease resistance, pod height, suitability of the cultivar to the area, as well as seed shattering are also important factors when it comes to yield. Harvest dates can be adjusted by planting cultivars with different growing season lengths. In areas where *sclerotinia* and rust are a problem, short season cultivars planted early can reduce yield losses considerably. Good formed seed planted in a well prepared seedbed with the correct fertilization, ensures a good plant stand and consequently yield. Inoculation with a well known brand of *Rhizobium* is also essential to ensure good nitrogen fixation, both for the soybean crop and future crops, in a rotation system. Soybeans are ideal in a crop rotation with maize bringing numerous benefits to the soil as well as profit margins.

If new cultivars are chosen, they should be planted on a smaller scale than the proven cultivars initially, to ensure they are suitable for the farm and area.

SEED QUALITY

Good seed quality increases the chance of good growth and a good harvest and has a big influence on the potential yield of the crop.

Genetically modified seed

The genetic modification (GM) of seed of many crops has enabled the world to produce more food on the same volume of land, with the same, or fewer, inputs. The cultivation of GM crops has increased dramatically since its introduction in the USA in 1994, and it is expected that these new technologies will increase even more over the next few years. This, together with the intensive research programmes of seed companies, has resulted in innovative products using well known familiar varieties with outstanding productivity and quality.

Certified seed

Seed companies guarantee certified seed to be of good quality and disease free. This is the reason why seed certification is so important. This is based on three factors:

- germination percentage – an indication of the percentage of normal seedlings that can be expected when grown under optimal conditions as well as the yield potential of the seed;
- seed vigor - gives information on the potential of the seed under different and not necessarily optimal conditions and
- seed size - the bigger the seed the more chance it has to compete with soil-borne diseases and competition from weeds. Research has shown that smaller seed does not influence germination but does influence plant vigor. If the seed is small, producers must ensure that their planters are correctly calibrated and that the pneumatic air pressure is adjusted to give the right plant populations. The ultimate rule is that bigger seeds will be more viable than smaller seeds.

Storage of seed

If seed must be stored for a few months before planting, it must be:

- * carefully handled so that it is not damaged, as this will adversely affect germination;

- * clean and stored in cool, dry conditions.

- * safely stored away from mice and rats.

Storing grain from the previous season to be used as seed is not a recommended practice.

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