

Secure Optimal Yield 2008 Harvest Report

Marketing soybeans in 2008 has been an exhilarating and often scary rollercoaster ride with futures prices ranging from \$15 in July to \$8 in December. But regardless of price levels, many growers across the country had more beans in the bin this year as a result of their participation in the Secure Optimal Yield (SOY) program trials this summer.

SOY is a grower education effort launched last year in the 2007 crop season through the cooperation of the American Soybean Association (ASA) and BASF. Soybean farmers in 25 states took part in the program this year.

Each participant agreed to reserve at least 20 acres for a field trial comparing two herbicide programs in Roundup Ready® soybeans. Control acres were treated with a single pass of glyphosate. Test acres are to receive an application of a BASF residual herbicide, such as Prowl® H20, Scepter® or Extreme®, in addition to the usual glyphosate regimen. In addition, the test acres are to be given an application of Headline® fungicide for Plant Health, while the control acres received no plant health benefits or protection against fungal diseases.

This article focuses on what SOY participants saw in their field trials this year utilizing the prescribed residual herbicide and fungicide applications. Grower

participants maintained records on the trials, including harvest yield results.

“ASA is partnering with BASF on the SOY program because part of our mission is to help

identify new ways for ASA members to maximize soybean yield and profitability,” said ASA President Johnny

Dodson, a soybean producer from Halls, Tennessee. “The crop management practices outlined in the SOY program give soybeans a better start on account of reduced weed pressure, and the use of a fungicide to boost overall plant health is consistent with our goal of providing customers with high quality U.S. soybeans for food, feed and fuel.”

**A Growers' Guide
from the
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Effingham, Illinois grower Tim Schoonover harvested 56 bushels from his SOY acres, three bushels more than his untreated acres. Schoonover applied a residual herbicide on May 15, and one application of Headline on July 25, when his beans were at R-3 stage.





Roy Wendte from Altamont, Illinois got an extra five bushels on his SOY acres this year.

Thanks to ASA's partnership with BASF, the SOY program also supports one of ASA's other priorities—membership. Through participation in the SOY program, current ASA members received a one-year renewal of their ASA and state association membership, while growers not already a member of the ASA received a free one-year membership with ASA and their state association. There were a total of 255



Monte Niemeyer noticed a big improvement in his stands.

memberships awarded this year through the SOY program, of which 176 were new members.

“We are a grassroots agricultural organization and one of the keys to our success is membership,” Dodson said. “The leadership of ASA gets direction from

our membership and we encourage our members to continue to participate in ASA and their state affiliates.”

Grower Comments

ASA member Roy Wendte from Altamont, Illinois, said “This is the second year I’ve been involved in the SOY program. The two BASF products I used this past year were Prowl H20 and Headline fungicide. I noticed a big reduction in tall water hemp, which has been a big problem in our area. Using Headline on our soybeans has significantly helped the health of our beans. Headline ultimately translated into a five bushel yield advantage.”

Wendte harvested 60 bushels per acre on his untreated acres and 65 bushels on his SOY acres. With soybean prices in the \$8.00 to \$10.00 range this fall, those five extra bushels could translate into an additional \$40.00 to \$50.00 per acre in revenue.

Monte Niemeyer, a grower who farms 1,000 acres near Bowling Green, Missouri, planted his SOY acres on ground where he planted wheat last year.

“As a first-year participant in the SOY program, I was happy with the results I got,” Niemeyer said. “Although the wet weather made it challenging this year, we still experienced a two to three bushel per acre increase in our yield. We also noticed a big improvement in our stands.”

Grower Gary Ludwig of Worthington, Iowa, said his SOY-acre beans jumped to 65 bushels compared to only 55 bushels for the untreated acres.

“This is the first year we’ve been involved in the SOY program and we’ve been really pleased with it,” Ludwig said. “We used Headline fungicide on our beans and had a 10 bushel increase over the test strip. We’ll for sure use it again next year, especially because of the yield bump.”

With increased disease pressure created by this year’s record rainfall, protecting soybean crops from yield-robbing foliar disease and stress should have been top-of-mind for growers. Headline fungicide delivers



Paul Merz increased his yield by four bushels per acre.

superior protection from disease and environmental stress. Ludwig's 10 bushel jump in yield even exceeded many previous field trials where Headline has consistently provided growers with a four to eight bushel per acre yield advantage in soybeans.

"Despite the difficult weather this year, we still saw a noticeable difference in our test strips," said Paul Merz from Bowling Green, Missouri. "Because of the SOY program, we increased our yield by four bushels per acre and noticed that our plants were healthier and greener with the use of Headline."

Overall, growers averaged about three bushels more per acre on their SOY acres compared to their untreated acres. The national average yield for soybeans in the United States is about 40 bushels per



Gary Ludwig had a 10 bushel increase in his SOY acres.

acre, but the overall average yield on 2008 SOY acres was 51.6 bushels, with the lowest yield reported at 24 bushels per acre and the highest at 71.4 bushels.

Weather made 2008 a tough year for growers in many parts of the country. The grower reporting only 24 bushels said, "They were under water three times due to flooding." The soggy ground also made it difficult for a number of SOY participants to apply chemicals in a timely fashion.

Despite these challenges, the opportunity to see a side-by-side Plant Health and yield comparison was a rewarding experience for SOY participants, and they plan to apply what they learned to next year's soybean crop.

Technical Comments

"SOY program participants experience the incredible benefits that maximizing Plant Health and minimizing weed competition provide for their soybeans," said BASF Technical Market Manager Nick Fassler. "It is a well-managed crop protection program designed to help growers get the most out of every acre."

Innovative crop protection products fueled by great chemistry are important parts of the equation toward protecting soybeans from environmental stress, disease and yield-robbing weed competition.

"Glyphosate resistance continues to be a top concern for growers. Residual herbicide use reduces weed competition while widening the window for post-emergence glyphosate application," Fassler said. "Prowl H2O herbicide provides an exceptional foundation for broad-spectrum, residual control of grass and small-seeded broadleaf weeds when competition on young soybean plants typically causes the greatest yield loss.

Fassler also adds that improved Plant Health and increased yields are evident on SOY acres because Headline fungicide delivers superior protection from disease and environmental stress.

For more information about the BASF portfolio of crop protection products, visit www.agproducts.basf.com.

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