

## ASA Urges Growers to Learn the Facts About Soybean Rust

The American Soybean Association (ASA) is encouraging all producers to get the facts about Asian soybean rust, a fungal disease that attacks the foliage of a soybean plant causing the leaves to drop early, which inhibits pod setting and reduces yield. ASA has been actively working on rust detection, prevention and research efforts for more than two years. Although soybean rust is not present in the United States, the association has been receiving calls from growers who are concerned about the risk of this disease entering the country.

"ASA is a membership organization, and the calls our staff is getting are from growers who are not ASA members," said ASA President Ron Heck, a soybean producer from Perry, Iowa. "If these growers were members, they would have received up-to-date rust information on a regular basis through our member communications during the last eight months."

In the March 2004 issue of their membership newsletter, *ASA Today*, ASA members received the full-color special *Growers Guide to Soybean Rust*, which provides the latest information about rust identification, the timing of fungicide application and the modes of action.

"Soybean rust has the potential to very negatively affect the U.S. soybean industry," Heck said. "With possible yield losses of up to 80 percent or more, ASA is doing all that can be done to prevent the introduction of rust into the United States, along with preparing for an eventual outbreak."

There is the potential for a natural introduction of rust into the United States that would likely result from spores being carried on wind currents or storms from West Africa or northern South America and the Caribbean. Soybean rust spores are easily transported in air currents and spread rapidly over wide distances.

ASA is also concerned about the risk of human-assisted movement of soybean rust that could occur as a result of imported plant materials infected with the disease, or travelers to infected agricultural areas bringing the disease back to the U.S. on their clothes.

"If growers want to help themselves, they should become ASA members and help us in our efforts to get Congress and USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) to provide adequate funding for research projects to develop rust-resistant soybean varieties," Heck said.

ASA's goal is to absolutely prevent the accidental introduction of soybean rust in order to give researchers more time to find answers to combat the disease. To prepare for the eventuality of the natural movement of soybean rust, ASA will continue to work to educate its members on the best management practices to combat rust in advance of an outbreak.

For the convenience of prospective members, ASA provides a secure online application available from [www.SoyGrowers.com/membership/](http://www.SoyGrowers.com/membership/). To learn more about joining ASA, please contact your State Membership Chair.

## ASA State Membership Chairs

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## ASA and Checkoff Enhance Soybean Grower Profitability

The American Soybean Association (ASA) and the soybean checkoff are working to expand the global market for U.S. soybeans.

The United Soybean Board (USB), made up of 62 farmer-directors, oversees the investments of the soybean checkoff on behalf of all U.S. soybean farmers.

The checkoff is working to build more profit potential into every U.S. soybean acre through production improvements. Checkoff dollars are funding research to develop new varieties with higher yield capabilities and increased quality.

"It is important from a competitive standpoint that we increase the quality of U.S. soybeans," said Board member Johnny Dodson, ASA's Conservation Committee Chair.

"Increased quality will keep our customers satisfied so they'll keep coming to the U.S. to buy high quality, high protein, high oil soybeans."

Checkoff funded efforts like the Better Bean Initiative (BBI) are effectively improving the market for U.S. soybeans. This research initiative is building a better bean in protein and oil content to retain or increase market share against competition from other soybean-producing countries.

"So that we continue to be competitive on a world basis, we need to give our customers what they want, and that's a higher protein soybean with higher levels of oil," said ASA Board member Darryl Brinkmann. "As science progresses, the nutritionists have found that soybeans are a great source of protein, but they'd like to see higher levels of certain amino acids in soybean meal for livestock feed because it would enhance animal performance and lower the cost to produce the animal products in the long run."

Soybean checkoff farmer-leaders are directing these soybean production improvement efforts to make sure dollars are invested where they will matter most.

"There's not anybody who knows what they need more so than the farmers themselves," Dodson said. "They know where the money needs to be spent, where the investment needs to be made, where research needs

to be done, and I would say that farmers are better qualified to do that than anybody else in the industry."

The farmer-leaders of the soybean checkoff are working to efficiently coordinate industry research and partnerships in areas that will increase the profit potential for U.S. soybean farmers.

"The farmers are in a unique position because they know what's important to farmers, and they can hear what's important to industry, and they can make decisions that are in the best interest of both, not just one or the other," Brinkmann said.

Checkoff dollars are also helping in the research and development of soybean varieties with drought tolerance and resistance to soybean cyst nematode and soybean rust. Although Asian soybean rust is not present in the United States, experts describe the spread of soybean rust as a matter of "when, not if."

"Finding a soybean variety that is resistant to rust is the most important thing we can do to resist the disease," said ASA President Ron Heck.

Maintaining yields after rust arrives in the U.S. is a vital component of maintaining the profitability of U.S. soybean farmers.

"The checkoff farmer-leaders recognized immediately the importance of more rapidly developing our strategies for dealing with rust," Heck said. "They immediately recognized that we needed to do research for fungicide applications and research for screening the germplasm so that we can have rust-resistant varieties sooner that would still be able to yield."

Improvement in soybean production is just one area where the checkoff is building more profit for U.S. soybean producers.

"The checkoff organizations are doing many things to improve the profitability of U.S. farmers," Heck said. "Through production research, breeding better soybean varieties, developing new uses, and international marketing, year after year, the checkoff has proved its value as a wise investment."

Checkoff funds, along with Foreign Agriculture Service dollars, support many international marketing programs that are implemented by ASA to expand foreign markets and increase the foreign consumption of U.S. soybeans.

PHOTO COURTESY OF UNITED SOYBEAN BOARD



The Better Bean Initiative (BBI) is a soybean checkoff-funded program to accelerate the availability and development of soybean seed with enhanced compositional traits that will better position U.S. soybeans to meet the needs of protein and oil end users and enhance economic value for U.S. soybean producers.