

## ASA Continues Leadership in Soybean Mapping

The U.S. Departments of Energy (DOE) and Agriculture (USDA) recently announced they will work together to sequence the soybean genome. For the U.S. soybean farmer, the implications of decoding DNA of the soybean (*Glycine max*) are enormous, which is why the American Soybean Association (ASA) has taken a leadership role in encouraging this work.

ASA Board member Joe Layton was recently elected to serve a second term as chairman of the U.S. Legume Crops Genomics Initiative, which brings together growers and scientists from the alfalfa, dry bean, peanut, dry pea and lentil, and soybean industries.

"For the U.S. soybean farmer, the implications of decoding the DNA of soybean cannot be overstated," Layton said. "We look forward to working with DOE and USDA as they help pave the path for soybeans to offer even greater benefits to human and animal health, as well as help meet our nation's energy needs."

Genome mapping is the path to better and more nutritious soybeans for human food and animal feed. The DOE stated that it is particularly interested in mapping the soybean since soybeans are the principal source of biodiesel.

Of the world's 20,000 species of legumes, soybeans are the world's most valuable crop. Their annual value is estimated at \$17 billion. Last year, U.S. farmers grew 3.1 billion bushels of soybeans on 75 million acres of land. In addition, soybeans and other legumes hold in the soil nearly 17 million tons of atmospheric nitrogen. This unique ability of legumes reduces the need for chemical fertilizers, reduces dependence on petroleum products, and improves soil and water quality.

DOE and USDA's work can also contribute to soybeans' ability to serve as a feedstock for cleaner burning biodiesel fuel that already offers the highest energy content of any alternative fuel. A USDA and DOE life cycle study of the energy balance of biodiesel produced from soybeans in the U.S. found that for every one unit of fossil energy used in this entire production cycle, 3.2 units of energy are gained when the fuel is burned, or a positive energy balance of 320 percent. Soybeans are the principal source of U.S. biodiesel. Last year, U.S. biodiesel production tripled to a record 75 million gallons.

Legumes also provide about one-third of global dietary protein and one-third of the processed

vegetable oil consumed by humans. They provide essential minerals required by humans, a blood cholesterol reducing effect and, given their hypoglycemic effect, are included in the diet of diabetics.

## ASA Powered by Members

As the advocate for U.S. soybean growers, the American Soybean Association (ASA), a membership organization, provides essential representation in Washington on all issues related to soybeans, such as the Farm Bill, biodiesel and protecting markets. This policy work by ASA is vitally important, because it cannot legally be done by the soybean checkoff, which is a totally separate entity from ASA.

The work of ASA is powered by the grassroots support of its dues-paying members. Become a member today. Complete ASA's membership application online at [www.SoyGrowers.com](http://www.SoyGrowers.com) or call the Membership Department at 1-800-688-7692, extension 1294.

The American Soybean Association is a national commodity organization with 25,000 members and affiliation with 25 states. For membership details, call 1-800-688-7692.

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