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Why You Should Consider a Soybean Inoculant for 2008

In many areas, inoculants are used every time soybeans are grown. However, the use of inoculants on rotated soybean ground is not standard in all areas, perhaps due to a perception that economic benefit is not worth the extra effort to make the application. I think that soybean marketing opportunities in 2008 require consideration for the use of an inoculant for maximizing farm profit.

The use of inoculants for new soybean ground is always recommended. Yield advantages for virgin soybean ground are often reported in the 30% range. Other situations where inoculants are generally recommended are for coarse textured (sand) and low pH soils.

Cumulative data from studies in Ontario, Michigan and Ohio provide good rationale for considering an inoculant every time you plant soybeans. A quick scan through some recent reports would suggest that a response of 1 bu./ac. is quite reasonable (see summaries and internet links below). If the practice of regular inoculation is economical at \$6/bu soybeans, how good are things at \$11/bu soybeans? If the cost of the inoculant is in the \$3-4/ac range (depending on product and rate applied), a 1 bu./ac. advantage provides a compelling reason to consider the use of an inoculant in 2008. And it doesn't even take a very sharp pencil to figure this one out!

Ontario

0.75-1 bu./ac. long-term average

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/pub811/4plant.htm#inoculation>

Ohio

1.7 bu./ac. in corn-soy rotations from 2001-2006

<http://corn.osu.edu/index.php?setissueID=170#F>

Michigan

1.3 bu./ac. advantage in 14 trials from 2003-2005

<http://web1.msue.msu.edu/soybean2010/Soybean%20Seed%20Applied%20Inoculation.pdf>