

Advice on selecting 2013 varieties

THERE are many steps to achieving successful soybean production. One is variety selection, and it may well be the most important. Public and private soybean yields from 2012 demonstration plots and variety trials have been posted. Do the yield results from demo plots along the local highway or the results from variety trials at the nearest university



Soybean Source

By MARK LICHT

farm mean more to you and your farm? Actually, they are both worth paying atten-

tion to, for their own reasons.

Keep in mind the 2012 test plot winner might not win in 2013. Also, variability in soil types could have affected demonstration plots in 2012 more than usual, because it was so dry. Refer to university guidelines for help in selecting varieties to plant on your farm in your conditions. We encourage farmers to use the Iowa Soybean

Variety Trial results published by Iowa State University when choosing varieties.

Public trials like ISU's include many varieties from various companies. These same varieties are tested at several locations, with replication within each location. That's why public variety trials provide a performance comparison across companies. Private trials, often put out by seed companies, can also have many locations featuring the same varieties, but are limited by the number and breadth of competitors they test against. Private trials have the advantage of genetic knowledge and performance across the company's entire seed portfolio.

My confidence in the ability of a variety to perform increases the more times I see it tested. That doesn't mean the variety with the most road signs wins. It means varieties should be looked at in as many locations and years as possible from both public and private trials. Multiple years, locations and trial types give a broad view of the consistency of a variety under various growing environments, soil types, disease pressure, pest pressure and weather patterns. Yes, it's true, yield has a genetic maximum, but yield consistency provides less risk year in, year out.

What about a drought year?

How do you interpret variety trials in a drought year? Will the top yielder in 2012 be the top yielder in 2013? In a year like 2012 it may be more important than ever to consider yield consistency.

Some varieties perform best under droughty conditions and produce just average yields in a normal year. Location will be the driver in your decision.

The location of a variety in a demonstration plot could prove to be more favorable, or perhaps unfavorable, due to soil moisture conditions. That's why we need to look at performance of soybean varieties in as many locations and growing environments as possible. And look at more than just one year's results, if more than one year of results is available.

Regardless of year, variety selection should focus not only on yield performance but also specific traits, such as SCN resistance, tolerance to SDS or white mold, and seedling root and stem rots to name a few. Genetics provide protection against diseases and pests that have few other controls. If given a choice to use genetics or take the risk of occurrence, I suggest using genetics to manage those risks.

Selecting the right maturity group can be a key factor, too. Choosing a variety that uses the entire growing season could result in bigger yields. A common comment is, "I don't want to take a yield penalty by growing an early-maturity variety" and leaving sunlight and yield potential in the field. Best bet is to plant a range of maturity groups to manage risk of frost but still take advantage of late-season sunlight.

Licht is an ISU Extension field agronomist based at Nevada in central Iowa. Contact him at lichtma@iastate.edu.

■ ISU tests many varieties across the state at multiple locations each year. Results of these trials can be a resource for your farm. Find them at www.crop-testing.agron.iastate.edu.

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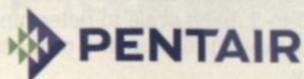
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