

Planting for Profits: Soybeans

Soybeans get less attention in terms of planting, planter settings, and population than corn, but these factors are equally important in soybeans reaching optimum yield and economic return.

1. Plant populations: I think ***we have been over planting soybeans for many years and recent research has shown this is probably true.*** In the past, planters and drills weren't as accurate, seed was less expensive and a dense stand helped control weeds—so a heavy stand was “good insurance”. Now planters and drills are more accurate at seed placement and seeding rates and Roundup Ready™ technology which makes seed more expensive also lets us achieve good weed control in “thinner stands”. I think an “adequate” population would be a final stand of around 100,000 ppa. If you are drilling you may want to shoot for a final stand of 120,000 ppa. ***How much money can you save?*** If you plant 120,000 ppa you can cover 1.25 acres with an average bag (an average bag of soybeans has approximately 150,000 seeds, 3000 seeds per lb * 50 lb bag). If that bag of soybeans cost \$28.00 and the seeding rate normally was 150,000 ppa you would have ***saved almost \$6.00*** an acre ($\$28.00/1.25$) with no yield loss from dropping your seeding population 30,000 plants per acre.
2. Plant growth habit: I think we need to select our soybean varieties for our row spacing. If you are drilling you may want to look at an upright growth habit. If you are in 15” rows look for a medium bush bean. If you are 20” or wider look for a medium bush to bush type bean. If you can get a soybean plant to branch, ***the more branches a plant creates, the more nodes it has. This gives the plant a greater opportunity for pods to set and achieve a higher yield.***
3. Planting date: ***Plant when conditions are ideal for that plant to succeed.*** Give every plant a fair chance; if this means conditions are fit by April 20th, it may be time to start planting. Don't rely on calendar dates; rely on soil temperature, soil moisture, and ideal field conditions for planting.