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Free soybean quality analysis offered

BY David Kee and Liz Morrison

As market demand rises for specific soybean traits, such as high oil, knowledge about soybean quality is becoming more important.

To help Minnesota farmers gain a better understanding of the specific qualities of their soybeans, the Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotion Council has joined with the University of Minnesota and Perten Instruments to offer free soybean analysis to all Minnesota soybean growers.

This confidential educational program is supported by your checkoff dollars.

The near-infrared analysis will "allow farmers to look beyond just oil and protein content," says Art Killam, research and plot coordinator for soybean breeding and genetics at the University of Minnesota, who is heading up the testing program. "This analysis also looks at moisture, amino acids, fatty acids, and sugars. This is a way to educate Minnesota farmers about the quality of their soybeans."

Detailed information about the quality of your soybeans can help you in several ways.

On the sales side, farmers can start thinking about marketing their soybeans based on specific traits the end-user needs. "There's potential down the road for market premiums" for particular qualities, Killam says.

Swine feeders, for example, need a well-balanced amino acid profile. Killam observes that even though Minnesota-grown soybeans are usually 1% to 2% lower in protein than beans grown in more southerly locations, "our essential amino acids are equal to higher-protein beans. Just because we have a lower protein content doesn't mean we have lower-quality soybeans."

On the production side, quality analysis can help you refine variety selection.

It can also help you understand how agronomic practices affect soybean qualities. Weather and environment are key variables, of course. In 2015, for instance, ideal rainfall pushed up the average oil content of Minnesota beans by about 1%, Killam says. That's an advantage for soybean crushers.

But in addition to weather, soybean quality is determined by many factors within a grower's control, including variety selection, your fertility program, and harvest methods and timing.

Combining data

In addition to telling individual farmers about soybean quality, the testing program will provide aggregated data about soybean quality statewide. This "big data" will help us better understand regional differences.

The aggregated data will also supplement annual soybean quality surveys by the United States Soybean Export Council, Killam adds. These surveys are essential for building a preference for U.S. soybeans in international markets.

To participate

The testing program, which will be performed at the University of Minnesota, requires only one cup of soybeans per sample. Growers will receive a written analysis along with state averages for comparison.

If you segregate your soybeans by variety, you can submit one sample for each variety. Or, send a blended sample. Samples will be accepted through August, 2016.

Label each sample with your name, address, phone number, email, and variety (if available). Include the key word "Minnesota." Mail samples to:

University of Minnesota
1902 Dudley Avenue South
118 Crop Research
St. Paul, MN 55105

For more information about the free soybean quality analysis, contact Art Killam, 612-624-2205, or email Killa001@umn.edu

Kee is an agronomist and research director for the Minnesota Soybean Growers Research and Promotion Council. Morrison is a writer from Morris. You can find information and links to Minnesota certified crop advisers at http://www.mcpr-cca.org.

Key points

•The Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotion Council is offering free soybean quality testing through the University of Minnesota.

•Soybean quality data can help with marketing and production decisions.

•The sampling program runs through summer, 2016.