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## Managing for High Soybean Yields

I know corn planting is just getting underway, but also know that the week ahead will be a very productive one based on today's weather forecast. There is the potential for some soybeans getting in the ground by the end of the week.

Palle Pedersen has pointed out seven steps to growing high yielding soybeans (variety selection, SCN management, early planting, narrow row spacing, early weed management, weekly scouting, soil fertility). I realize that it is late to be thinking about some of these, but early planting and weekly scouting are two keys that should be emphasized.

New research points out that planting as early as April 25 in west central Iowa and May 1 in Northwest Iowa results in increased photosynthesis, greater number of main-stem nodes, more rapid growth rates during pod set, a longer reproductive period, and a greater seed filling period.

Scouting is critical to reduce or eliminate yield robbing insects, weeds, and diseases. Know what's going on in the field before deciding on a blanket, one-size-fits-all application is important. Weekly scouting is a must.

Another component of soybean production is seeding rates. It's common knowledge that more seed planted equals higher seed costs. The question is whether yields are there to pay for more seeds or not. A target of 100,000 plants per acre at harvest is enough to realize optimal soybean yields. Dropping 125 to 140,000 seeds per acre is often enough to stay above the harvest target population after taking losses for poor germination, damping off, etc.

More information on Managing for High

Soybean Yields can be found in these three publications;

- [Managing Soybean for High Yield](#)
- [Soybean Planting Date](#)
- [Optimum Plant Population in Iowa](#)

The entire publication series can be found on the [ISU Soybean Management](#) webpage.

## Soybean Seed Treatment

There is no doubt that soybean seed treatments can be extremely helpful when planting into potentially cool or wet soils or when fields have a history of disease. When should seeds be treated and do they boost yield potential? Here's the low-down; seed treatments do not boost yield potential, they simply protect seedlings and potentially yield because plant populations may be improved with seed treatments, but if seeding rates were already inflated an increased population would not necessarily translate into higher yields. Here are 4 cases to consider treated seed;

1. poor seed quality,
2. field history of severe damping off,
3. replanting due to stand loss,
4. planting before May.

More details on seed treatments can be found in a recent [Soybean Seed Treatment ICM News](#) article.

## Alfalfa Weevil Scouting Should Start Soon

Larvae of alfalfa weevil start to hatch at approximately 250 growing degree days in fields north of I-80. For west central Iowa 250 GDD will likely be reached later this week.

Begin scouting based on the projected hatching dates, but remember that scouting should start on south-facing hillsides. Larvae typically will hatch here first because these areas warm up more

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quickly than north-facing hillsides.

Using a sweep net can save time when first scouting a field for alfalfa weevil larvae. With the sweep net, a field can be quickly and easily checked to determine whether larvae have hatched. If no larvae are found in the net, then move on to the next field. However, if larvae are found in the net, then collect 30 stems and count the larvae in the upper leaves.

Alfalfa weevil can be very destructive to first cutting alfalfa. They remove leaf tissue, beginning with the new leaves in the top of the plant, then work down the stem to other leaves. Feeding reduces forage quality and quantity.

### **Questionnaire About NRCS EQIP Funding**

The Iowa Learning Farm is working with the Integrated Pest Management Institute and the North Central IPM Center NRCS Working Group to develop and enhance the NRCS' EQIP pest management practices and incentives, and to make the incentives increasingly attractive to Iowa farmers.

Please help us meet our goals by answering the seven questions in [Survey Monkey](#).

The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) was reauthorized in the 2002 Farm Bill to provide a voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers promoting agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants to install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land.

EQIP offers contracts that provide financial assistance to implement conservation practices. Program practices and activities are carried out according to an EQIP program plan of operations developed in conjunction with the producer that identifies the appropriate conservation practice or measures needed to address the resource concerns. The practices are subject to the NRCS technical standards adapted for local conditions.

EQIP provides payments up to 75 percent of the incurred costs and income foregone of certain conservation practices and activities. Farmers may elect to use a certified Technical Service Provider (TSP) for technical assistance needed for certain eligible activities and services.

(source: USDA NRCS website: [www.nrcs.usda.gov/PROGRAMS/EQIP](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/PROGRAMS/EQIP))