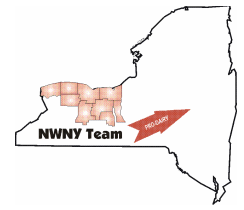


NWNY Dairy, Livestock & Field Crops Team

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Serving the counties of:

Genesee ♦ Livingston ♦ Monroe ♦ Niagara ♦ Ontario ♦ Orleans ♦ Seneca ♦ Wayne ♦ Yates



IMPACT STATEMENT

IPM Education Programs: *On-Farm Soybean TAG*

The Need

In 2007, an estimated 205,000 acres of soybeans were planted in NY, 65% of which was grown in the nine counties covered by the NWNY Dairy, Livestock, & Field Crops Team. The continued threat of introduced pest species such as soybean aphid and Asian soybean rust and herbicide resistant weeds have required more hands-on training on pest ID, sampling, and management in order to keep soybean acres increasing and profitable. Additionally, producers need continuing education points in pest management to maintain their pesticide applicators license and remain certified with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

Tactical Ag (TAG) Teams have been an effective teaching model for bringing small groups of producers together in a hands-on approach by using their fields as outdoor classrooms. The principles of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and improved crop cultural practices have been the educational focus of the TAG program.



TAG Teams are a great hands-on way to learn better scouting/field management.

Extension's Response

The NWNY Team partnered with the NYS IPM Program on a grant funded through the Northeast Regional Soybean Board. Five "On-Farm Soybean TAG Teams" were coordinated across NY in 2007. The NWNY Team established two of these teams across Monroe, Ontario, and Livingston Counties. These two teams had 18 participants from nine farms and two local agri-businesses. Collectively, these producers grew over 4,100 acres of soybeans.

Throughout the growing season, teams met five times to observe and discuss current field scenarios and possible threats to soybeans in their area. Meetings began in early May and the team met once a month through September with each farm hosting a TAG meeting. Participant farms served as open classrooms and pest management and crop cultural practices were viewed and discussed in the field. Participants were given handouts and reference materials which complimented the topics being covered each month. Even though there was a heavy emphasis on IPM, particularly soybean aphids and Asian soybean rust, other topics included plant populations, planting depth, soybean growth stages, variety and maturity groups, fertility, tillage, early season insects and diseases, weed ID and management, foliar diseases, harvest and storage.

Each TAG member picked one soybean field that we scouted once a week throughout the summer. If weeds, diseases or insects were found to be at damaging levels, growers were contacted and we worked with them on a one-on-one basis.

The Results

Those producers who were certified pesticide applicators earned eight NYS-DEC continuing education credits towards their spray license. Participants learned how to correctly identify, sample, assess, and apply different management tools on potential soybean pests including insects, weeds and diseases. The weekly scouting visits also encouraged members to begin their own sampling programs and become more familiar with their crops. They also gained the self confidence needed to make pest management decisions on their own.

Pre and post-tests were given at the first and last meetings of the year to measure any impact our TAG program may have had on the knowledge base of our TAG members. Collectively, these participants increased their general knowledge of soybean integrated pest and crop management by 23%. Test averages increased from 63% for the pre-test to 86% for the post-test.

Growers expressed that TAG made their farming operation more profitable by providing "Decision making knowledge", "Proper pest and weed ID", "When to apply pesticides for aphids and diseases" and "What to spend money on and what not to". Final participant comments included, "Would like to do it again", "Very worthwhile program for NY farmers", "Liked field experience" and "Super job of presentation and involving the group". Three producers would recommend and eight highly recommend the TAG program to other soybean producers in their area next year.