



May 11, 2011

## Early Season Weed Control

# AGRONOMY TOPIC OF THE WEEK

Early season weed control is key in all major crops that we produce. Competition at early stages in the crop's life can greatly affect yield and early season vigor. Fortunately, there are many solutions for preventing early season weeds from taking a big toll on our crops.

Corn is our largest crop by volume that we deal with and is probably the most important to get off to a clean start. Weed competition at emergence that lasts through V4 or V5 can be devastating to final yield. It is not unheard of to lose 30+ bushels to weed competition at this stage. The weeds rob the soil of nutrients as well as compete for sunlight with the young corn seedlings. Luckily there are many products that we can use to stop early season competition from being an issue. Products like Harness, Outlook, Dual, and newer premix products like Surestart, Verdict, and Tripleflex are just a few of the options we can look at. Not only are these products very effective, but we can apply them in different ways and at different times. Most products can be impregnated in either the fall or the spring or can be sprayed on as a Pre-plant incorporation, or even sprayed on after the crop is planted. Bottom line is that to achieve maximum yields and limit crop competition, it is imperative that all corn fields have a pre emerge product on in one form or another.

It has always been said that soybeans are not affected by early season weeds nearly as much as corn. This statement is only somewhat true. Although soybeans can tolerate early season weed pressure a little better, it has still been proven that yield reduction is still taking place. The idea of waiting until all the weeds have come up is probably not the best idea. Weed emergence patterns vary based on species, and waiting until later in the season when all the weeds have emerged may mean that some weeds are extremely large and beyond the size that we will be able to control effectively. There are many products available today to help us battle weeds early in soybeans, some new and some not so new. An early season application of a yellow product such as Prowl or Tri-4 that is incorporated is still an extremely effective first step option. There are also a lot of Pre-emerge products like Optill, or Valor just to name a few. We even have some products that can be applied with a very early glyphosate application, such as Warrant or Cadet. There is pretty much something for any system.

Bottom line with corn or soybeans is that pre plant and pre emerge applications pay. With all the money invested in the production of the crop and the potential return from the crop, it seems silly to not do everything to help the crop reach its potential. Keeping early weeds from being a problem is a easy way to help set yourself up for a good yield. As always, talk to your local agronomist to formulate a plan that fits your operation.