News from Northern New York Agricultural Development Program

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NNY Corn and Soybean Disease Database Tool Needed, In Development

With funding from the farmer-led Northern New York Agricultural Development Program (NNYADP), Cornell University researchers are undertaking a comprehensive diagnosis and assessment of the diseases that impact corn and soybean crops in the NNY region.

"The systematic assessment of corn and soybean diseases in the Northern New York region is long overdue," says Cornell University Plant Pathologist Gary C. Bergstrom. "The Northern New York Agricultural Development Program is funding a proactive disease evaluation that will create a benchmarking database as a management tool to help growers maintain strong production and profitability."

Corn and soybeans are high value crops as livestock feed and cash crops for Northern New York farms. Cornell University estimates the Northern New York corn grain industry alone to have an annual value of $50.6 million. From 2011 to 2012, the value of the regional soybean crop, grown on some 300,000 acres, increased $1.37 million to $5.39 million. NNY soybean exports have more than tripled since 2010.

Bergstrom says the greatest needs for assessment and proper disease identification concern leaf blights, ear rots and stalk rots in corn crops and foliar blights, stem rots, pod rots, viruses and other systemic diseases in soybean crops.

"The profit margin for crop producers is often narrow. The more calculated information we can provide growers, the better they will be able to proactively and profitably maximize their production efforts," Bergstrom says.

Cornell Cooperative Extension Field Crops Educators Mike Hunter and Kitty O'Neil are collecting field observations and crop pest and disease specimen samples in Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence counties. Anything that cannot be identified will be sent to the Bergstrom Lab at Cornell for identification.

Frogeye leaf spot, sudden death syndrome, brown stem rot and soybean vein necrosis virus were all confirmed in individual soybean fields in the region in 2012 for the first time.

This 2013 disease data collection, along with annual NNYADP-funded on-farm corn and soybean variety trial data, will be tabulated into a matrix to help farmers make decisions on which varieties to plant, when to scout for problems, and which treatment options are best used to prevent or manage the various crop diseases.

NY Corn and Soybean Growers Association Executive Director Julia Robbins says, “Regionally-specific research helps growers address the unique growing conditions and challenges that exist in their area. What we learn from this research in Northern New York will be helpful to farmers statewide in terms of developing comprehensive scouting, disease identification and planning strategies to proactively meet crop disease head-on.”

The NY Corn and Soybean Growers Association is funding a complementary effort evaluating soil-borne disease in soybeans in four counties in Central and Western NY.

Those assisting the project include Cornell Willsboro Research Farm Manager Michael Davis, Miner Institute Agronomist Eric Young, Cornell Cooperative Extension Executive Directors Anita Deming in Essex County and Rick Levitre in Franklin County, and Cornell University Research Support Specialist Jaime Cummings.

The Northern New York Agricultural Development Program provides practical, on-farm research, technical assistance, and outreach to farmers in Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties. Learn more about agriculture in Northern New York and find NNYADP project announcements and results at www.nnyagdev.org. -30-