

I share the following news item on research being conducted to assess potential control of soybean rust in organic soybean and vegetable legumes. The next update is expected in June and I will also circulate that to you. The bottom line today is that there are no disease control products registered for use and approved for certified organic application with proven ability to control soybean rust. That is the motivation for the current research described in the report. Some older literature suggests that multiple applications of copper compounds may have some effect but that needs validation. For New York organic producers, my best advice this summer is to plant organic beans in a timely manner and to consult your crop insurance agency to find out their criteria for best management practices in organic production.

Gary Bergstrom

--- begin forwarded text

"A PROGRESS REPORT to Members of the: SOYBEAN RUST; IMPACTS ON ORGANIC PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

It has been some time since our conference call on May 13, 2004 concerning the potential impacts of Soybean Rust (SBR) on organic production systems. While I have had conversations with some of you I have not reported back to the whole group since June, 2004. This does not mean that we have not been struggling to get this problem competently addressed.

As you no doubt know SBR has been documented in the continental United States. It evidently was conveyed into the Southern States last fall during the unusually active hurricane season. Recently SBR has been documented on Kudzu in Southern Florida. This is particularly significant because this is the area where the disease is expected to overwinter in the continental U.S.

In the past few months folks at the Michigan State - Kellogg Biological Station and at Iowa State have taken leadership on the SBR and organic systems problem and have moved forward rapidly. CSREES has granted emergency funds through Iowa State and the Kellogg Station for efficacy testing of organically approved fungicides. The actual field work will be through cooperating researchers at University of Florida at Gainesville. I understand that Rodale Institute has also expressed interest in cooperating in the work.

It is important that we remember that while soybeans are the largest crop susceptible to SBR it is likely that other legumes may be impacted. We are most concerned about horticultural legumes and dried beans. There is substantial production of both of these crop groups among organic farmers in the U.S.

As soon as the inputs field testing is set up the Kellogg Station and Iowa State team will develop a comprehensive research proposal to be submitted

for consideration this spring under the CSREES Integrated Organic Program. While a small part of this proposal will endeavor to continue the testing of inputs, the greater thrust of the research will be study of systems approaches for adequate management of the SBR impacts on organic farming. As this proposal is developed we will come back to you for letters of support. I will continue to help facilitate the work of the Kellogg Station and Iowa State team. As always you can direct inquiries to me via email or phone.

In our work over the past few months it has been encouraging to learn that there is some old data from the sixties and seventies that indicates that the coppers do have some efficacy against SBR. This work was included in work that was done in Asia before the rust began to move into other areas. It was also interesting to be among some farmers in Iowa who had a number of strategies at hand. Most of those in this group had two alternative crops that they have begun to experiment with. Both flax (oil type) and improved varieties of field peas have begun to look like useful crops in their systems. The fact that most of these farms included livestock also gives them the flexibility to green chop and feed out an infected field very quickly, before a total loss to SBR occurs.

The first round of efficacy testing will include one of the coppers, a hydrogen peroxide product, at least one proprietary botanical based product and at least one of the approved biologicals. All of the inputs tested must be approved for use in organic systems and have the appropriate EPA registration. Continued efficacy testing may include more such materials and materials that have not yet been approved or registered but that appear to show potential efficacy. Of course these materials should meet National Organic Program criteria for approval and be considered eligible to be registered for use as a fungicide with EPA."

Best,
Ted

Ted Rogers
Biologist, Senior Policy Analyst
USDA Office of Pest Management Policy