

Background on Asian Soybean Rust

Asian soybean rust, caused by the fungus *Phakopsora pachyrhizi*, has now been found in 18 Alabama counties. The list includes Baldwin, Blount, Cherokee, Cullman, DeKalb, Elmore, Escambia, Etowah, Henry, Houston, Lauderdale, Limestone, Madison, Marshall, Mobile, Monroe, Morgan and Tuscaloosa. Soybean rust has also been confirmed on soybeans in nine states including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, South Carolina and Tennessee. Most likely, spores of the pathogen were carried by winds from Hurricane Ivan into the Gulf Coast region.

In 1984, an economic risk analysis projected that the potential losses in the U.S. would be \$7.1 billion per year, once soybean rust was established in the main soybean growing area of the United States. A conservative prediction indicated yield losses greater than 10% in nearly all the U.S. soybean growing areas with losses up to 50% in the Mississippi delta and southeastern coastal states. How rust will actually effect soybean production in Alabama and the other southern states is unknown as only time will tell as the disease becomes established in the United States.

We have been anticipating the arrival of this disease since 2002. Fortunately, the pathogen made its entrance into the continental U.S. at the end of the 2004 growing season causing no apparent yield reduction to this year's crop. Its late arrival also allows growers ample time to become familiar with the disease and the methods necessary to manage it this upcoming season.