Episode 18—Early Planted Soybeans

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Announcer:

The Alabama Crops Report Podcast, your trusted information source for Alabama agriculture.

Scott Graham:

Hey everybody, and welcome in to another episode of the Alabama Crops Report Podcast. I'm Extension Entomologist Scott Graham.

Adam Rabinowitz:

And I'm Adam Rabinowitz an Extension Economist.

Scott Graham:

Adam, how's it going today?

Adam Rabinowitz:

I'm doing really good Scott. It's nice to be here with you. This is the first time in all our episodes that you and I have hosted together.

Scott Graham:

Yeah. So we'll see. I don't know if they've kind of planned us not to do that together or what, so we'll see how it goes.

Adam Rabinowitz:

I don't know, but I'm looking forward to it.

Scott Graham:

Yep. Same here. All right. So our guest today is Eddie McGriff. Eddie's our regional extension agent Northeast, Alabama came down to, to Auburn today to record with us. Eddie, how's it going?

Eddie McGriff:

Good. Scott and Adam.

Scott Graham:

Good, good. And we appreciate you coming down to talk to us today about some of the stuff you've been working with, particularly the kind of moving into early planted soy beans in Alabama. But before we get to that, something that we've kind of started doing on the podcast the last couple of weeks is just trying to get to know our folks better. So tell us a fun fact about yourself.

Eddie McGriff:

I guess a fun fact, when I was at Auburn and I played football right before my sophomore year, I tore my ACL in my knee. And so I go up to the Houston clinic. And at that time they were still cutting the knee open and repairing it. And it was a long recovery period. Well, a new surgeon for the Houston clinic, Dr. James Andrews, who had become a world renowned surgeon operate on a lot of famous athletes, then not one so famous, me. He tells me we're going to do a new procedure and we've never done it before. And this is arthroscopic surgery and it's going to allow you to recover quicker and get back on the field. So I was the first one that he did the arthroscopic surgery with.

Scott Graham:

So anybody who's favorite athlete has had arthroscopic surgery, particularly by Dr. James. Andrew can thank you for what it, is what you're saying.

Eddie McGriff:

No, I'm not saying that. I'm just saying that they had to have somebody that wasn't that good to practice on before they really got the good athletes.

Adam Rabinowitz:

They needed that Guinea pig to start with, is that it?

Scott Graham:

So that's pretty interesting. Yeah. So how long have you been with Alabama extension now?

Eddie McGriff:

I've been with them for five years before that I was with the University of Georgia extension for 30 years. And I was a county agent in some of the bigger AG counties in south Georgia, Calhoun, Decatur and Coffee County. And then for four years after I retired from the University of Georgia, I was a multi-state agronomist with Southern states before coming back home. I'm originally from Cullman, Alabama. I wanted to come back to the north Alabama, and this gave me the opportunity in a job that I really love.

Adam Rabinowitz:

Yeah, that's great. It's Great to have your experience and your expertise in that area.

Scott Graham:

Like I said earlier, we brought you on to talk about this kind of moving into ultra early and early planted soybeans. So what do you consider to be ultra early or early planted beans?

Eddie McGriff:

Well, altar early would be anything planted in late March to the middle of April. And I consider early planted beans, anything from mid April to the 1st of May. And so we're seeing more and more growers go to this ultra early or the early planted beans with indeterminate variety. One thing I would say is when you get down to south Alabama, the indeterminate varieties do pose some risks in that the seed quality during the heat of the growing season, when the pods are forming, the seed quality may not be there. So if you're in the furthest south of Alabama, I would not advise early indeterminate varieties unless they were under irrigation. And I would experiment with the varieties and make sure that I could get good seed quality.

Adam Rabinowitz:

So Where are we right now? Just in terms of the planting time that you just mentioned, where are we right now heading into the growth stage?

Eddie McGriff:

Well, had several growers that, that planted alter early in early planted in north Alabama, we see more and more growers going to this system, even though it competes with planting corn at the same time, but the beans that were planted, I have some growers that planted as early as April the six and some that planted in mid April. Those beans are potting right now. And that's very important because you want pot fill to be during the longest days of the year. And so June 21st is our traditional longest day of the year. So if we can get these beans potting

and they began to pod on June the 21st or a little bit earlier, that means we'll have more sunlight available for the plant. More photosynthesis to make sugars that are put into pod production. And this is what gives us typically our higher yields by planting in April versus May in Alabama.

Scott Graham:

Another thing, Eddie, with that is a lot of times we wanted the best insecticides we have and soybeans is planning date. We can plan earlier. We can catch things like stink bugs on other crops, corn, something like that when we're kind of putting those pods on, like you mentioned a lot of times or the defoliators, particularly in north Alabama, where you are coming later in the year. So we can catch them at a time when maybe our beans aren't quite as susceptible to a defoliation and things like that as well. So that's another good benefit we have earlier planted beans.

Eddie McGriff:

Well, not only stink bugs and our foliage feeders, but also by planting early, sometimes we escape some of the diseases that are brought in by a tropical storm, such as Asiatic soybean rust. And also if we can plant early, sometimes if we plant in a field with nematodes, we can get a headstart on those nematodes.

Scott Graham:

So a lot of advantages there offer this system, but are there any disadvantages to making that change?

Eddie McGriff:

Well, I guess the biggest disadvantage would be the potential for a frost or a freeze. Although soybeans are actually more tolerant of cold weather than corn is the only difference is corn grown point is under the ground to B5 or B6. So it's kind of protected. But soybeans will stand several hours of 28 to 30 degree temperatures before you get freeze damage. And that doesn't mean the air temperature is 28 to 30 degrees. That's got to be the temperature around the soybean plant. And usually it doesn't get that cold around the soybean plant. If we look at our neighbors to the north, Indiana and Iowa, they advise their growers the best time to plant soybeans is in late April. So they're actually planting before we are. And when you look at most of the work that's been done so far on early planted soybeans for broad scale farmers is Mississippi and Arkansas, and they recommend that mid April or actually April the 10th to April the 20th is the ideal time for them to plant these early planted beans.

Eddie McGriff:

So we got a lot of people that are planting early planted beans. In fact, one grower that I worked in in south Georgia, Randy daddy has set two world records with these early planted beans. So it gives us a lot of opportunity for high yields. And also another thing it gives us advantage of, we might be able to take advantage of a positive basis by getting them off in September or early October versus later planted beans.

Adam Rabinowitz:

Now you're talking about some of my language there when you start talking about positive basis and [crosstalk 00:08:16] as an economist.

Eddie McGriff:

Yeah we've had growers that have got a dollar more for their beans by getting them off in September. So, you're not only talking about higher yields, but you're potentially talking about higher prices. So generally when you get them off in September in north Alabama, there's a positive basis. It may just be to how much the mules want the beans, but I've seen it from 50 to a dollar a bushel.

Adam Rabinowitz:

Well, that could be pretty significant. That's certainly a nice advantage for producers.

Scott Graham:

I'll tell you earlier, we were talking about some kind of some fun facts potentially, and one thing that you didn't mention that I think my teenager would absolutely love is that you're a YouTuber, right? So you've got your own YouTube series, The Bean Counters.

Eddie McGriff:

Yeah. The Bean Counters.

Scott Graham:

Tell us about that a little bit.

Eddie McGriff:

Well, I've asked the only two growers that have documented a hundred bushel yields in Alabama, or a hundred bushel per acre yields and our Nick McMaken, who was our first grower to do it up in Cherokee county. And he did it at 101 bushels. And then in Limestone county, the Henderson farms who have also done a hundred bushels. Well, I've asked these two growers since they've done a hundred bushels. If they'll allow me to go through the growing season and film them and interview them during each stage. So we've done eight episodes so far of The Bean Counters, and they have proved pretty popular because farmers like to see what other successful farmers are doing. And this year, the one thing is Nick McMaken has done the early system and he's planted 600 acres in early planted beans in mid April.

Scott Graham:

And Eddie with that, and I'm sure you've talked about these in your Bean Counter episodes as well, but what kind of input differences are they seeing? And now we're planning a different maturity group by planning that early?

Eddie McGriff:

We're trying to get indeterminate variety and usually indeterminate varieties end at your early five, usually a 5.2, although we do have some indeterminate varieties that are in the mid fives, but what we're doing is planting these indeterminate varieties in trying to get them off early. The one input that I would say that they normally have more cost involved in it. And that is potash. What we've seen in replicated research on farms is that these high yield beans, if you'll put an application of potash out at R1 R2 early bloom, give it time, this keeps the potash level up in the leaf and keeps the leaf food factory going a little bit longer.

Eddie McGriff:

And what we've seen is larger beans. And these larger beans has translated into a higher yields. In other words, generally beans we'll do 28 to 3,200 seed per pound. Well, with these early beans, with the supplemental potash we're getting from 2000 to 2200, so you get bigger beans, you're going to get higher yields. Now, one thing I will say, unless you're going to make 75 or 80 bushels, I don't making a additional potash application because we just don't see the yield increases until we get to these higher yields.

Scott Graham:

The plant doesn't need that supplemental, unless you're really pushing to the maximum of what that plant can actually produce.

Eddie McGriff:

It's just not really economical. If you're making 50, 60, 65 bushels, we just don't see the yield increases. And we definitely don't see the economics of putting additional potash because generally if have your soul well, fertilized for according to the soil sample, you've got enough potash to make these 50 to 60, 65 bushel yields. But most of our soil samples aren't set up for people that are wanting to make a hundred bushel plus soybeans.

Adam Rabinowitz:

That's some really great information, and what do you think now that we're here in July? What do growers need to be concerned about in terms of soybeans and moving forward with the rest of the season?

Eddie McGriff:

Well, the biggest thing that they need to be concerned about is stink bugs and Scott and I are going to do a soybean scouting video afterwards, but I would say that stink bugs are number one past, but the other thing they need to be worried about is foliage feeders. Last year in north Alabama, we had a pest that came in that we generally don't see and that's the velvetbean Caterpillar. And so they literally just stripped the plants and that can easily be taken care of. You're making a fungicide application. If you'll put out two ounces of Demling, we'll give season-long control of some of our voracious foliage, feeders velvetbean caterpillar, the green cloverwarm. It is not so good on the soybean looper, but can give you some suppression, especially if you go at higher rates.

Scott Graham:

And Eddie I'll mention a real quick that we were hoping we weren't going through this year, but we've already started picking up some red banded stink bugs found some on the research station in Prattville a couple of weeks ago. The week after we got a call from a grower in the black belt about some red banded stink bugs. And that one, as you know, is a little bit different than our other kind of traditional stink bugs. If you will, the green or the Southern green stink bug, the red banded is a little bit more aggressive or thresholds are reduced for that particular insect.

Scott Graham:

So that's just something to be looking for. If you're out in the field and you see kind of a smaller green stink bug with a red band on its back, there's a good chance that is the red banded stink bug. That's another one just, just to be looking for. But yeah, I agree at this point in the year from an insect standpoint, it's stink bugs are what we're primarily worried about, but we're also getting ready to start thinking about some foliage feeders as well.

Eddie McGriff:

Well, last year, Scott, you and I did a video on the red banded at stink bugs scouting for it in soybeans. So I guess that's a timeless YouTube video. So I just probably need to send it out to our growers again, if they're unsure on how to scout for the red banded stink bugs, they can view the video that you you've made with me, and this will help them out.

Scott Graham:

Yeah, that's a good plug there.

Adam Rabinowitz:

And that little bit of scouting can have some really important economic considerations.

Eddie McGriff:

Yeah. I would say that stink bugs sometimes are silent killer. They can cause a lot of damage, not only in soybeans, but in corn and cotton also. And the other thing we have to realize is when corn dries down in north Alabama, corn is a great host, a refuge for stink bugs. They're going to be leaving that corn and they're going to go look for something else to feed on. And that's usually soybeans or cotton.

Scott Graham:

Yep. Yep. Absolutely.

Adam Rabinowitz:

Well, Eddie, it's been a pleasure having you on the Alabama Crops Report Podcast. Is there anything else that you'd like to tell our listeners about any other upcoming programs or anything?

Eddie McGriff:

Well, I just wish that we continued to get timely rains and then they quit at harvest time. That may be a little bit too much to ask for, but we've been very fortunate. We've had good moisture at least up in north Alabama, all during the growing season. So when we get to harvest, the cotton bowls start opening and we need to harvest corn and soybeans. We hope to get some dry weather.

Scott Graham:

Absolutely.

Adam Rabinowitz:

That's right.

Scott Graham:

All right. Well, thanks for your time today, Eddie, we appreciate you making the trip down to the main campus to visit with us and Adam enjoyed it today.

Adam Rabinowitz:

Absolutely, Scott, good being with you and thanks again Eddie, appreciate you being here.

Scott Graham:

All right, folks. Well, we appreciate you all listening in. I really, really appreciate our listeners for supporting us and as always, if any of us can ever be of any help, please don't hesitate to reach out and let us know.

Announcer:

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