Soybeans: The “New” Crop

The Situation
From 1990 until 2010 there was usually one soybean producer in Burke County each year and seldom the same producer from year to year. With recent advances in genetics and changing weather patterns soybean production is becoming more profitable in Burke and other northwestern North Dakota counties. Increasing interest in soybean production has led to a need for producer education about all aspects of soybean management in the area.

Extension Response
Soybean production basics have been a regular topic in my news articles, and at producer meetings I’ve held for several years. NDSU Extension Service state and area specialists with responsibility for soybeans, developed a training program called “Getting it Right in Soybean Production.” I hosted and helped teach one of those full day meetings in Lignite in January 2017 with 33 producers present. Following that meeting I presented a condensed version of the material to producers at the Burke County Ag Improvement Association Annual Meeting and at a “Diversify Your Crop Rotation” meeting in Wildrose with 40 producers present. Only 2 of the producers attending these meetings indicated having five or more years of soybean production experience. Most had two years or less experience. Most had no soybean production experience but indicated they planned to try them in 2017.

Impacts
These educational efforts have educated soybean growers on variety selection, soybean diseases, control of insects, intensive crop management, and economics. 100% of the attending producers who completed evaluation forms indicated that they learned useful information which would help them improve their soybean production. Examples of the information they intended to use included fundamentals like seeding depth and seeding rates, the value of inoculants, selecting varieties, equipment requirements, row spacing, and fertility requirements.

Feedback
Many attendees commented that the programs would help them avoid costly mistakes.

Public Value Statement
Producers use of the best management information available through the educational efforts of myself and other NDSU Extension personnel improves their success rate for adaptation of new crops reducing reliance on crop insurance and improving their profitability which helps improve local economies. In Burke County, soybean production has increased from just 1,790 acres in 2013 to 32,359 acres in 2017. Using budget information from the 2017 Northwest Crop Budget guide those 32,359 acres of soybeans at an average yield of 29 bu. per acre provided Burke County producers over 1.6 million dollars additional net income compared to production of hard red spring wheat on those acres.

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