

News Column
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LATE PLANTED SOYBEANS

It was just two weeks ago that I was worried about soggy soils, and wondering if we might have soybean emergence problems, caused by waterlogged soils shortly after planting.

I suppose it is still possible that a few fields planted right before the rains in mid-May might have stand problems. If stands aren't good, those fields need to be re-planted as quickly as possible.

The more likely scenario is that fields just didn't get planted during the off and on rains we received during the last half of May. For many Riley County farmers, it was June 5 before they were able to plant many soybeans.

K-State research suggest that late May to early June is the optimum time to plant soybeans in Riley County. Temperature at flowering and rainfall throughout the summer will, of course, determine the ideal planting time for this year,....after fields are already planted. As a general rule though, we would like to be done planting soybeans by June 10.

When planting later, increasing the seeding rate by 10-20% can help compensate for the shortened growing season. The same soybean cultivar will develop nearly 50% more productive nodes when planted during the recommended late May to early June window, versus a late June planting date.

Because later planting will result in fewer nodes per plant, it makes sense to plant a few more seeds to compensate for some of the lost node development caused by the shorter growing

season.

How much you increase the seeding rate when planting late might depend on your current “normal” seeding rate. K-State studies show that a final stand of 100,000 plants per acre is enough on our better soils. Most producers would expect 85-90% emergence, and drop about 120,000 seeds per acre to achieve the 100,000 plant final stand.

If you are already planting 140,000 to 150,000 seeds per acre – instead of 120,000 – then you probably don’t need to increase your seeding rate when planting soybeans in mid-June. Again, I am assuming 85-90% emergence.

If you tell me that you only get 60% emergence, then I’m going to encourage you to overhaul, or replace your planter. Not all planters are equal. When we conducted soybean population studies about 15 years ago, the low end for emergence was close to 50% and the best was 95%.

I know you are curious, so I’ll answer the question you are wanting to ask. Yes, the producer whose planter wasn’t getting a good stand purchased a newer planter before we returned to plant plots the next year.

Interestingly, the optimal final plant density (during the ideal planting window) is about 100,000 plants per acre for medium and high yield environments, but is closer to 120,000 plants per acre for low yield environments.

Yes. You read that right. You need more plants if you are expecting a lower yield.

The bottom line for today is this. Now that we are past mid-June, you should increase your seeding rate 10-20% when planting soybeans. It is time to start dropping 140,000 to 150,000 seeds per acre on your medium to high yielding fields.

If you have questions, you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-

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