

Common themes run through the On-Farm Network™, CEMSA and Watershed Programming

In recognizing the need and benefit of evaluating crop production for economic and environmental performance, the Iowa Soybean Association instigated programs at the field, farm and watershed levels.

Through the On-Farm Network, many farmers are finding big savings at the field and farm level in annual production costs by studying fertilizer use and nutrient management practices.

The findings of individual farmers can be applied to their whole farm through CEMSA (Certified Environmental Management Systems for Agriculture) and to the drainage area in which the farm is situated

through targeted watershed programming.

All three Iowa Soybean Association programs take into account the fact that farm operations are enormously complex by nature, and are specifically designed to help farmers manage that complexity. Whether it's the On-Farm Network, CEMSA or Watershed Programming, the goals are to consistently refine management, find real improvement, and share learning with other farmers, so that they can develop confidence in the management practices they use.

At every level, it's all about taking a consistent, progressive approach to improving performance. ◆

Watershed Programming participants and the Nitrogen Conference

Todd Sutphin, state watershed coordinator for the Iowa Soybean Association, says the Nitrogen Conference provides all farmers with an opportunity to learn what other growers have learned from nitrogen trials on their farms.



Todd Sutphin,
Watershed
coordinator

“For watershed project participants who have an ongoing stalk sampling routine or have run strip trials on their farm, the conference is a good opportunity to compare their own farming operation's data to others across the state. And it's possible for many of them to learn some new techniques or see some new ways of looking at their management systems,” he adds.

Sutphin also says the conference will feature a poster presentation summarizing activity in each of the Iowa Soybean Association watershed projects.

“Last year's poster presentation provided a comprehensive analysis of the year's nitrogen and yield data by watershed. This shows watershed program participants what farmers in other watersheds are doing and their results. Reviewing results from other watersheds and comparing them to their own may help them as they go about building strategies for their home watershed.”

“The Nitrogen Conference can also enhance what farmers learn at their individual watershed meetings. Overall, there's a tremendous opportunity for any farmer — watershed participant or not. A lot of knowledge will be available there, which farmers can use to gain ground in their farming operation as well as in their watershed projects,” Sutphin says.