

## Herbicide Programs

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While the snow has put a stop to most of the harvest and fieldwork in the area, farmers are still busy making decisions for their operations. While applications won't be made for several months, now is a great time to plan next year's herbicide program for your corn and soybeans.

The first step in making an effective herbicide program is to know and understand what weeds are present and will cause issues in your fields. Understanding the life cycle, germination timing and any resistance to herbicides is important in putting together a successful plan.

For most soybean farmers, Roundup, Liberty or Dicamba will be the primary herbicides used to control emerged weeds in season. The decision on which of these herbicides to use is often made when purchasing next year's seed. While these herbicides all have their strengths, many other herbicides are available and can be safely used on all soybean varieties. The most important herbicides in a program will be those with residual activity. Residual herbicides have been proven to provide the greatest return on investment of all herbicides when considering the number of weeds controlled and length of effectiveness. If you are planning to cut herbicide costs, cut in the post-emergent application, not in the pre-emergent application.

When making herbicide decisions, be sure to consider the herbicide and mode of action that you have used in previous years. Mixing multiple modes of action that are effective on certain weeds is one of the best management practices to prevent weed resistance from developing. Weed resistance occurs over time, and many growers don't realize that a problem is there until it is too late. What growers may see as escapes one year can eventually turn into a resistant weed variety if the same herbicide or mode of action is used consistently. For your troublesome weeds, try to apply at least two effective modes of action, and rotate herbicide families every year.

Also, although they may be the most popular option, herbicides are not the only management technique available to control weeds. Cultural and mechanical methods such as crop rotation, row spacing and tillage should also play a role in your weed management program.

Lastly, be sure to scout during the next growing season and make any changes necessary to your plan. Inevitably, problems will arise. Have a back-up plan, and be prepared to implement it when this happens.