

Count cost of weed resistance

THE question came from the front of the room. When it was asked, every head turned to see who had raised their hand. It felt like altar call time on the anxious seat: The fervor of the preacher imploring everybody to close their eyes and respond to the question.

This time, however, all eyes were open and everyone in the audience was rubbernecking.

At a symposium sponsored by Valent

Cut & Dried

and organized by University of Georgia weed scientist Stanley Culpepper, the questions were posed to a roomful of weed scientists at the Southern Society of Weed Scientists annual meeting recently held in Nashville.

"How many of you are conducting research on weed resistance?"

To this question, the majority of the room raised its collective hand.

"How many of you are taking an interdisciplinary approach to the problem?"

Again, hands went up in unison.

And the final question: "How many of you are including economics as part of the research?"

As heads turned to see how many were incorporating economics into the study of weed resistance, the number of hands raised decreased.

describing the symposium addressing weed resistance as a "Dilemma in Dixie," I sensed the angst that weed scientists are feeling right along with farmers. Everyone in agriculture is facing what one weed scientist described as "a train wreck coming in two or three years if we don't get something different out there."

To be sure, weed scientists are hard at work on the issue, conducting cutting-edge research and getting the message out to growers.

Front-burner issue

Weed resistance to Roundup Ready and ALS inhibitor chemicals has been on the front burner since the problem emerged in horseweed in west Tennessee more than six years ago.

Today, it's pigweed that is "the ticking time bomb." Roundup Ready is too valuable a tool to abandon, so you'll hear more from us on this issue. Chemical companies have recognized this in their strategies for the future.

As growers attended production meetings this winter, they got a heavy dose of resistance-management language. At the meeting in Nashville, the question about economics continued to hang in the air as the weed scientists contemplated a plan of action. The need to have integrated research is often an obvious one these days. The one about economics should take on the same pitch.

By presenting weed resistance in a dollar-and-cents manner, the issue will take on a local and urgent nature. Confronting weed resistance, just as other major problems in agriculture, will take a concentrated, regional and down-the-road approach.

Not that much profit

In the February issue of the *Mid-South Farmer*, we referred to the potential of corn to the bottom line as driving the decision of many Mid-South farmers to plant the crop.

Somewhere along the line, an extra zero was added. A potential profit of \$700 per acre on corn this year at \$3.50 per bushel turned into \$7,000 and thus a number of calls and e-mails.

If you can make \$7,000 an acre on corn this year, go for it. If not, an additional \$700 will probably be enough to make you smile.

Thanks for pointing out the mistake and reading the *Mid-South Farmer*.



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