

Survey of Michigan Sugarbeet Production Practices

A survey of Michigan sugarbeet growers attending agronomy meetings in 2014 show growers have adopted production techniques recommended by research.

Every year a series of educational programs are held for the Michigan/Ontario sugarbeet growers. These programs are well attended by growers and agribusiness. The most recent research information is presented by Michigan Sugar Agronomist/Researchers and Michigan State University Extension Sugarbeet Advancement. The research and educational content covers a variety of topics to improve quality and management of the sugarbeet crop. A survey was conducted at the meetings to evaluate grower's adoption of management practices. Growers that responded to the survey represented 44,000 acres or about 25% of the sugarbeet acres in Michigan.

A lot of research and effort has been focused on controlling Rhizoctonia root rot. This disease has been a chronic disease that not only reduces tonnage but also sugar content. Research has shown that timely Quadris applications are very effective in controlling the disease. The survey indicated that 97% of the growers are using Quadris for controlling Rhizoctonia. About 50% are applying two applications, in a T-band in-furrow plus 6-8 leaf stage. Research has shown that a narrow in furrow T-band (3-5 inch) and reduced rate is as effective as the full rate in furrow with a 7 inch band. The survey indicated that 89% of the growers are using the narrow T-bands.

Nitrogen management is extremely important for optimum sugarbeet growth and quality. Too much nitrogen will reduce quality and too little will reduce tonnage. Research has shown N-rates should be higher (140-160 lbs./acre) following high residue crops such as corn and be lowered (110-130 lbs./acre) when following low residue crops like beans. The survey indicated that 90% of the growers are applying nitrogen in the recommended range when following either high or low residue crops.

If left unchecked, Cercospora leaf spot will greatly reduce yield and sugar content in sugarbeets. The survey indicated that 75% of the growers are using BEETcast to help time fungicide applications. To help minimize fungicide resistance, tank mixing different modes of action is recommended. The survey indicated that 50% of growers are always tank mixing and additionally 20% are mixing more than half the time. Only 5% of the growers were not tank mixing at all. To improve resistance management growers need to incorporate a new mode of action in their spray program. The survey also indicated that about 30% of the growers used Super Tin in 2013 and another 16% are planning to use it in 2014. Overall, leaf spot was held in check last year with 57% spraying 3 times and 26% with 4 or more applications.

Michigan Sugar Cooperative has put a strong emphasis and invested heavily in agronomic research and education. This has paid good dividends to the Michigan industry with an average yield increase of 6/10th of a ton per year since 1997. We also have the highest quality beets of any production area in the USA. Attending educational programs regularly allows the Michigan/Ontario growers to be

extremely competitive with other growing areas. Growers that attended last year's programs indicated that 94% intended to incorporate information from the meetings into their beet production practices. A total of 95% felt that attending the educational programs would have a positive economic impact on their farming operation.

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