

1658 20<sup>th</sup> Ave SW  
Crookston, MN 56716

April 28, 2006

Dale Sullivan  
North Dakota State University  
Minard 322G  
Fargo, ND 58105

Dear Professor Sullivan:

Enclosed you will find a copy of the report concerning the discourse in the agricultural research field prepared for ENGL 320 at North Dakota State University.

The report was compiled from research obtained through the use of the internet and a personal interview with Dr. Edward Deckard of the Plant Sciences Department at NDSU. Through the analysis of documents regularly used in the discourse community, the outcome provides insight on the various communication forms employed in the agricultural research field.

Feel free to contact me with any further questions.

Sincerely,

Diana Hanson  
North Dakota State University  
ENGL 320  
Diana.Hanson@ndsu.edu

Enclosure

# Discourse in the Field of Agricultural Research

Diana Hanson  
North Dakota State University  
ENGL 320

April 28, 2006

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## **Abstract**

This report explores the world of agricultural research discourse. It includes an introduction into the meanings of discourse and other related terms, an explanation of the methods used to acquire information on the topic, a results and discussion section where specific examples of discourse are given, and a conclusion report of the project. The outcome of this report is to obtain better insight on the discourse practices of the agricultural field.

## **Introduction and Literature Review**

The purpose of this report is to explain and discuss the types of discourse practices that occur in the field of agricultural research. In general, the term “discourse” refers to “verbal expression in speech or writing” according to Answers.com. It can be as simple as a spoken conversation or as formal as a written discussion on any number of topics (Dictionary). When a group of individuals discourse with each other in order to achieve similar goals and purposes, this group is referred to as a discourse community. According to Borg, this “discourse community” formed from the theories of “speech community and interpretative community.” The speech community deals with a grouping of people who see that how they use their language differs from how others use their language. The interpretive community doesn’t relate to a grouping of people like speech and discourse communities do, but instead “an open network of people” that all communicate on the similar methods they read and interpret literary writings (Borg). Therefore, by combining the idea of a grouping of people verbally discussing topics from a speech community and the concept of using written forums to communicate, the result is a discourse community.

The specific kind of formats, techniques, and styles utilized in each can be investigated to determine and define a particular discourse community from another. These designs and arrangements refer to the genre of each community (Sherwood). Orlikowski and Yates suggest that affiliates of any “community rarely depend on a single genre for their communication.” Rather, they rely on a wide variety of ways to communicate with each other (Orlikowski). According to Kain, this variety of genres “allow[s] people to recognize and act on the social purposes of texts within particular contexts.” (Kain). By using these specific genres to

communicate with each other, people in the group know that the information being said is meant principally for their purposes thus uniting the discourse community.

Another way to distinguish among discourse communities is through the forum that is employed. The forum can actually refer to either the series of topics that is being discussed or where these discussions occur (Glossary, Terminology). The topics help to convey the group's overall messages and accomplish their overall goals. By providing a place to meet, the forums can also facilitate easier communication efforts between members of the community.

In either way of defining discourse communities, genre or forum, it is important to remember that these differ in dynamism and "situatedness." (Berkenkotter). From time to time and from situation to situation, these styles and topics covered vary in order to fit the specific setting each occurs in.

By exploring the genres, forums, dynamism and situatedness in a particular discourse community, one can be better prepared for effectively communicating their idea or message to others in the community with lessened confusion. For this report, the primary focus is on the discourse in the Agricultural research community, the field of study I am entering into.

## **Methods**

In order to analyze the discourse that goes on in any field of study, there are a few primary ways to find out the common methods of conversing. One of the first and foremost methods used today to conduct research on a particular topic is to search the internet primarily by making use of a reliable search engine like Google.com. By simply entering a "keyword" and hitting the 'Enter' key, the browser displays a list containing a plethora of links related to the topic the researcher is concerned with (Essentials). However, close examination of several of

these links is required before believing what has been published on any particular page. Since anyone with access to a computer is allowed to start up their own website on any topic of their choice, the information from the sites examined may not be based on true facts but rather personal opinions on the topic. Needless to say, it is important to be prepared for a little background research on the site before using the information in a public manner.

Once some preliminary research is done over the internet, another, much more reliable method should be employed. By this I am referring to the technique of conducting a personal interview with someone in the profession that has credentials on the topic. What better way is there to learn about something than to ask someone who's actively involved in it day in and day out? The qualitative information that is obtained from an interview especially helps facilitate a better understanding of the topic being researched.

From initial internet and personal interview exploration, the researcher should be able to develop a list of documents that are pertinent examples of how members of the discourse community communicate. Through deeper investigation into several of the initial documents, one can be more confident that what they have discovered either applies to their discourse community or doesn't. This analysis of the research that one has accumulated is important in any research paper in order to determine reliable from unreliable information. This creates a higher level of credibility for the writer. By picking a single piece of work that's been determined to be relevant to the case, further exploration into the document can give increased insight on the audience and an enlightened way to communicate to the desired discourse community.

## Research and Discussion

In the field of agricultural research, scientists develop and carry out a wide variety of projects in order to better understand what's going on in the world around them with a particular emphasis on plants and animals. Since I am pursuing a degree in the Plant Sciences Department at North Dakota State University, I have focused my study on the discourse that occurs with plant research. Plant scientists are typically employed by the government at a university or with the United States Department of Agriculture in the agricultural research service. There are also research positions at many worldwide companies focused on developing higher quality agricultural practices and products. Since agriculture is such a broad field, scientists can specialize in any variety of themes such as crop production, horticulture, weed science, genetic breeding, and biotechnology as well as several others (Nelson).

Through my initial research and personal interview, I was able to develop a broad gathering of documents that are common in the agricultural field. All of these documents fit into three broad categories: scientist to scientist casual communication, scientist to grower and general public communication, and scientist to scientist scholarly communication. Casual scientist to scientist communication primarily involves the use of email where the subject being discussed does not require official proof that what is being proposed actually has been proven. Scientist to grower communication primarily occurs through the publication of extension bulletins and informative articles. Scholarly scientist to scientist communication involves the use of articles published in scholarly journals like the Crop Science journal and list serves that revolve around any number of topics. Dr. Ed Deckard, a professor in the Plant Sciences Department at North Dakota State University, described these three forms of discourse in the personal interview I conducted with him (See Appendix) (Deckard).



Upon investigation into the audience that the paper was written for as well as examining the written structure used in the document, it is fairly easy to separate each form of document into its specific category. In the casual scientist to scientist communication, there is typically no need for any citations to books or journal articles. Although, references to more credible sources can be present in order to provide more information in the email. The language used tends to be specified to the exact topic of discussion. In scientist to grower communications, citations will usually exist in order to make the scientist's information more credible. However, in this case, the document will be in a friendlier, easier to read format than that of a scholarly article. In this form of discourse, the writer generally has more freedom with creativity and the layout used to present the information. In the scholarly scientist to scientist communication, articles are published in nationally and internationally recognized journals which require specific formats that need to be followed depending on the journal the article is trying to be published in. These documents usually contain an overwhelming amount of technical terminology that can be rather confusing to someone not directly involved in the project (Deckard).

In order to fully understand the discourse used in my discourse community, I have closely examined an example of what I termed "scientist to grower communication." The piece under inspection is an extension bulletin titled "Soybean Production" that was written by Dr. Duane R. Berglund and Dr. Ted C. Helms (See Appendix). The authors of this article are both professors in the agricultural field at North Dakota State University. The text gives an overall view of nearly every aspect that should be considered by someone who's either considering or already is growing soybeans in North Dakota. The exigence of this document would be the need for growers to follow these guidelines for growing soybeans in the best, most profitable possible manner. The importance of this is to keep ND farmers in business in order to keep people like

the authors of this bulletin employed. If the consumers that are purchasing your products don't know how to make the most of the items, chances are that your product won't be in use for very long, thus eliminating your line of work. By using terminology any farmer would be accustomed to, the idea of the importance of following good management practices is effectively conveyed. Although this article is presented in a rather formal style, with proper citation where need be, it only adds to the actual credibility of the writers and the information they are providing (Berglund).

In order to persuade the growers to use these methods, the authors appeal to the audience's ethos, logos, and pathos, or in other words, character, logic, and emotion. According to Dale Sullivan, head of the English Department at NDSU, "Ethos may convince them that the idea is being presented for their own good," and "logos may convince them of an idea's usefulness," but "pathos activates the urge to respond." (Sullivan). In "Soybean Production" ethos is conveyed by the fact that the writers of this article are professors in the agriculture department giving them expert status on the topic at hand. Logos is used to stress what the grower should and shouldn't do in order to obtain the best possible growth in any particular year. By writing "Soybean should not follow alfalfa, dry edible beans, canola, or sunflower where white mold disease (*Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*) has been detected," the authors imply that this is the best method conceived by them to deter the development up of this particular disease in any field. Ultimately, however, the final answer is up to the individual grower. Finally, a good example of pathos would be where the authors advocate the idea of the grower doing some of their own investigation into the topic such as "When evaluating private company performance data and descriptions, make comparisons with public varieties grown for several years in your local area." (Berglund). By suggesting the audience be more involved with the choices to be

made when growing soybeans, they will feel more compelled that they can somewhat control the outcome of the crop they plan to raise.

## **Conclusion**

Not only in the agricultural research discourse community, but in any community, the importance of proper communication between members is key. Like Dr. Deckard stated in my interview, “In any form of writing that you do, you have to take a look at your audience.” (Deckard). If you don’t specify your work for how it is intended, then your effort has been a waste of time. It’s also very important to remember the structure and format that is to be used in each individual document in order to conveniently present your message to the reader. You have to remember proper use of language as well as ethos, logos, and pathos in whatever you write to whomever you are addressing. The specific ways used to convey these ideas may vary from time to time and situation to situation, but communication will always be a very important step in the progression of society.

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## Appendix

### Discourse Research Interview

Dr. Edward Deckard

Loftsgard 270E, NDSU

April 24, 2006

#### 1) What are the major reasons that cause you to write and converse with your colleagues?

Since the last step of the scientific method is communication, it's very important to convey your findings with others. Any type of research work doesn't really have any importance if you don't tell anyone. By communicating to others, you give your work value by helping them and essentially everyone because somehow, you are working to make life better.

#### 2) What would you say would be the most common forms of communication you use to discuss these topics with your colleagues? (written types vs. verbal types)

Written research reports that are published in journals and list serves of scientific groups on the internet are very common ways for scientist to scientist communication. Extension bulletins are published to convey messages to growers and the general public. Email is universal for more personal communication where less proof for what you're saying is needed.

#### 3) How frequently do you use these forms of communication?

List serve is something that is accessed nearly every day, even weekends. Whenever something has been added, you receive an email so you can read some new information on the topic you're working on.

Publications are important, but not necessarily viewed every day. They're more common when you're researching prior to beginning a project or when writing a publication yourself. Since publications can be accessed at any time for many years after being printed, you have to be careful that the information is documented properly, otherwise you could lose your credibility and be in a heap of legal trouble.

#### 4) In all the documents that you write, who would you say is your most typical audience?

In the extension reports and other short works, the audience is typically growers in the ND area. These differ from scientific journals because they are written for scientists that may be studying a similar topic a few floors away or even on the other side of the world.

#### 5) Are there any specific formats you generally follow when writing these documents?

Each scientific journal that you are looking to publish your article in has specific guidelines. Every few years, the association in charge of the journal will print a book on the current format to follow when writing an article for their journal. In the scholarly journals, it's all about documenting your findings in a very professional manner. There's hardly any room for creativity due to the fact that you have to follow their style guidelines exactly if you want them to publish your work. Dr. Deckard believes this is why many students view science as "not fun" to read or explore. By removing the creativity and excitement from a paper, you make it difficult to maintain the reader's interest.

#### 6) When you write to someone not in a university setting, are there any differences that exist in either how you convey your message or the format you use?

In any form of writing that you do, you have to take a look at your audience. It could be one of the most ground-breaking piece of work ever done, but if you're writing it to a journal and you don't provide any proof, your work will basically be thrown away like it doesn't even matter. Likewise, if you're writing a very important extension bulletin and using terminology that is too excessive in form, the grower may just skip over it and never read the vital piece of information you're trying to convey.

#### 7) Do you have any examples of any documents (grant proposals, research papers, extension bulletins) that I would be able to review and use in my paper?

-Fact sheet designed for Monsanto titled "Physiological Maturity in Wheat" that's geared towards growers.

-"Plant Biotechnology" written for the local community on the progress that has been made in plant biotechnology and its effect on agriculture.

-"Grain Protein Determinants of the Langdon Durum-*dicoccoides* Chromosome Substitution Lines" reprinted from Crop Science, a scholarly journal. Its format is nearly identical to the format used to write this discourse paper.

## Soybean Production

A-250 (Revised), June 2003

Dr. Duane R. Berglund, Professor, Extension Agronomist

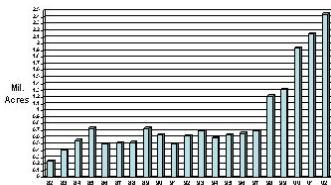
Dr. Ted C. Helms, Associate Professor, Plant Sciences

*Soybean is an important cash crop in the eastern third of North Dakota.*

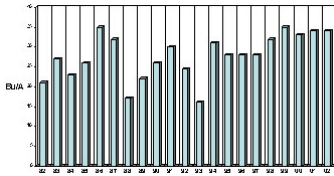
The North Dakota Agricultural Statistics Service reported 6,000 acres of soybean harvested in 1946. In more recent years, soybean acreage sown has been over 2.0 million acres, (Figure 1). However, as with other crops, soybean acreage will fluctuate in response to the anticipated price-yield return ratio. In 1986, 500,000 acres were planted to soybean, whereas 2.45 million acres were reported planted in 2002. Acreage estimate for 2003 is 3 million. The state five-year average yield for 1996-2000 was 31 bushels per acre (Figure 2). The average for 2002 was 34 bushels per acre.

Statewide record yield of 35 bushels per acre occurred in both 1986 and 1999 which were excellent soybean growing seasons.

**Figure 1. Soybean planted acres, North Dakota, 1982-2002. Source: North Dakota Agricultural Statistics Service.**



**Figure 2. Soybean yields, North Dakota 1982-2002.**



Source: North Dakota Agricultural Statistics Service.

**Adaptation**

Soybeans are a full season crop. However, increased acreage in northern and east-central counties suggests economic feasibility in those areas. The need for a long growing season and satisfactory soil moisture during flowering and pod filling are very important. Soybean can be considered in rotations when irrigation water is available. Matching soybean maturity and genetics is important in stabilizing yields and economic returns.

**Soil Reference**

Soybeans grow best under good soil conditions. A fertile, medium-textured loam soil usually is best. Soybean can be produced on a wide range of soil types. Heavier, fine textured soils should have good drainage. Sandy loam soils warm up faster, allowing soybean to emerge sooner and develop rapidly. Soybean planted in soils with a pH greater than 7.8 with high salinity or in high lime soils may have leaf yellowing due to iron chlorosis or other nutrient problems. Some varieties of soybean are more tolerant to high lime soils.

**Rotations**

Soybean fits well in many North Dakota crop rotations. Wheat yields at Fargo were 35 percent greater when planted on soybean land than when following wheat, surpassing other tested crops as a contributor to wheat crop yields the following year (Table 1).

**Table 1. Effect of previous crop on wheat yields under no-till and conventional tillage systems at Fargo, N.D.**

	Conventional Tillage Wheat Yield		No-Till Wheat Yield	
	Wheat Yield (bu/A)	Wheat on Previous Crop (%)	Wheat Yield (bu/A)	Wheat on Previous Crop (%)
Wheat	33.8	100	33.3	100
Soybean	45.3	134	44.9	135
Sugarbeet	40.8	121	38.8	117
Sunflower	39.3	116	39.1	117
Corn	38.6	114	37.3	112
Flax	38.0	112	37.5	113
Barley	37.0	109	36.0	108

Source: Dept. of Plant Sciences at North Dakota State University, Eight (8) years (1977-1984).

Also, no-till wheat yields following soybean were higher than following other previous crops. Studies from neighboring states have shown corn to yield better following soybean than following corn. Soybean, a legume, provides a break in the biological cycle of various cereal diseases, accounting for part of the recorded yield increases.

Soybean should follow corn, wheat, barley or other grass crops in a rotation to minimize disease carryover and to optimize the nutrient utilization within the soil profile. Soybean should not follow alfalfa, dry edible beans, canola, or sunflower where white mold disease (*Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*) has been detected. White mold has occasionally reduced soybean yield in North Dakota. White mold uses soybean as a host and this allows the organism to carry-over to other susceptible crops.

White mold usually has been observed in solid-seeded fields of soybean, whereas the problem has seldom been reported in 30-inch row or wider spaced plantings. If soybean are to be planted on white mold-infected land, planting in 30-inch or wider rows is recommended. This allows increased air movement and reduces the chance that the disease will develop to an economically damaging level. The risk of yield loss from white mold is greater with lodging susceptible varieties.

Soybean has limited crop residue levels after harvest and often cause the soil to be sufficiently mellow so that deep tillage for seedbed preparation is not necessary, except when weed infestation is serious. However, mellowing and low post harvest residues may predispose the soil to additional erosion.

**Soybean on Soybean**

The major concerns with planting soybeans on soybeans are disease problems, weed specie shifts and increased soil erosion susceptibility.

**First what about yield potential?**

It is not a certainty that a second year of soybeans will yield poorly, although this behavior does tempt fate. Organisms that parasitize soybeans are a major concern. Three pest problems that may develop are white mold, brown stem rot and soybean cyst nematode (SCN) (not in North Dakota yet!) These problems are well documented in other states to be greater problems in continuous soybean. Since white mold and soybean cyst nematode persist in the soil. Brown stem rot overwinters and can also live as saphrophyte on soybean residue. A few other organisms that survive the winter on residue include those causing bacterial blight, bacterial pustule, anthracnose, stem canker, pod and stem blight, brown spot, etc. Soybeans on soybeans promote these organisms because the first year of soybeans allows reproduction and buildup of disease inoculum and nematode populations causing the second year of soybeans to be planted into elevated disease or nematode levels.

If the second year growing season is dry, some disease incidence could be down.

Moldboard plowing may help control some (but not all) of the fungi and bacteria that survive on residue. Unfortunately, heavy tillage of soybean residue has other negative impacts — soil tilth can be destroyed and increases erosion potential. Spring moldboard plowing is not advisable.

Weed species shifts, or the increase of a particular weed species in the population of a field have been known to occur when continued cropping with the same crop occurs. The increase of biennial wormwood, ALS resistant Kochia and water hemp are examples. By planting the second year of soybeans and applying the same herbicide or cultural practices you are helping speed the selection process. From a natural perspective your field wants to have weeds growing in it. The objective is to prevent a buildup of those resistant weeds that are hard to control or to control the escape weeds which may occur in continuous Roundup Ready soybean plantings.

**Soybean Variety Selection**

Soybean variety selection should be based on maturity, yield, lodging and disease reaction. Comparative maturity and yield of public and some private soybean varieties can be obtained from a current copy of NDSU Extension Service publication A-843, "North Dakota Soybean Variety

Performance Testing" (current year) or at the following NDSU Extension web-site:

[www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/aginfo/variety/soybean.htm](http://www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/aginfo/variety/soybean.htm)

Generalized areas of adaptation are indicated by zones in Figure 3 (see back page). In general, seed Maturity Group 1 in Zone 1, Maturity Group 0 in Zone 2, Maturity Group 00 in Zone 3 and as early a Group 00 as possible for Zone 4. When evaluating private company performance data and descriptions, make comparisons with public varieties grown for several years in your local area.

#### Soybean Maturity

Soybeans respond to day length so the actual calendar date is highly influenced by latitude location. Each variety therefore has a narrow range of north to south adaptation. Soybean yield and quality are affected if a season ending freeze occurs before a variety reaches its physiological maturity. Dates of maturity as listed in yield performance tables indicate when the plants in a variety are observed and estimated to be physiologically mature. Usually harvest will commence approximately 7 to 14 days after the soybeans are physiological mature.

Relative maturity ratings are also provided for many of the varieties entered in the trials at various locations. These ratings consist of a number for the maturity group designation such as: (000, 00, 0 or 1) and followed by a decimal and another number, ranging from .0 to .9, which indicates maturity rankings within each maturity group.

For example the variety Jim is indicated as 00.6, making it a medium maturing variety in the 00 group. Walsh would be a 0.0 making it one of the earliest variety in the 0 group whereas Sargent is a 0.8 making it one of the later varieties in the 0 group.

Values in the tables of public varieties were developed after observing them for a number of years and sites. Relative maturity ratings for private varieties were developed in a similar manner.

Suggested public varieties are listed in Table 2.

**Table 2. Agronomic characteristics on public soybean varieties suitable for North Dakota production.**

Variety	Group Maturity	Fargo Relative Maturity	Height	Hilium Color	Zone**	Remarks***
Jim	00.6	early	short	yellow	3, 4	7
Traill	0.0	early med.	med.	yellow	2, 3, 4	2, 7
RG200RR	0.0	early med.	med.	yellow	2, 3, 4	2, 7, 9
Walsh	0.0	early med.	med.	yellow	2, 3, 4	2, 5
MN0201	0.2	med.	med.	yellow	2, 3	3, 7
MN0302	0.3	med.	med.	buff	2, 3	2, 5
Barnes	0.3	med.	med.	buff	2, 3	3, 5
Nornatto	0.3	med.	short	yellow	2, 3	3, 7, 10
Nannonatto	0.3	med.	short	yellow	2, 3	3, 7, 10
Norpro	0.6	med.	med.	yellow	1, 2	3, 7, 11
SD1081RR	0.8	med. late	med.	yellow	1	2, 9
Sargent	0.8	med. late	med. tall	yellow	1, 2	3, 5
Surge	0.9	late	med.	Imp. Black	1	2, 4, 6
SD1091RR	0.9	late	tall	Imp. Black	1	2, 9

\* Listed in order of maturity (earliest to the latest). Danatto is a natto bean and Norpro is a Tofu bean

\*\* Zone - see map - Fig. 3. For Soybean maturity zones.

\*\*\* Remarks:

- (1) Sensitive to Sencor/Lexone
- (2) Good Iron-Chlorosis resistance
- (3) Sensitive to iron-chlorosis on high pH soils
- (4) Plant Early
- (5) Resistant to Races 1-4 of phytophthora root rot
- (6) Resistant to Races 1 and 2 of phytophthora root rot
- (7) Susceptible to phytophthora root rot
- (8) Susceptible to white mold
- (9) Roundup Ready variety
- (10) Natto Bean
- (11) Tofu Bean

Soybean lodging characteristics are an important consideration when conditions favor high yields. Lodging reduces yield and creates harvesting problems. Where higher yields are obtained under irrigation, lodging is a major factor to consider in variety selection, water management, and planting density.

Most Corn Belt soybean diseases such as phythium, phytophthora or stem canker have not been a serious problem in North Dakota, or brown stem rot. Rotation of crops is important to prevent these diseases. Research workers will develop information on disease control strategies as disease pressure increases.

#### Transgenic Soybeans

Transgenic soybeans are the result of incorporating a foreign gene into the DNA of the soybean plant. The most popular example currently of a transgenic soybean is resistance to a non-selective (glyphosate) herbicide. These transgenic soybeans are referred to as Roundup Ready soybeans and will be planted on an estimated 70 percent of North Dakota soybean acres in 2003. Varieties with maturity adapted for the northern soybean growing regions are now available.

NDSU researchers include the RR soybeans in variety performance trials for comparisons on an annual basis. In 2002 the conventional soybeans and RR soybeans were approximately equivalent in yield performance at most locations. The economics of transgenic soybeans must also be taken into account when preparing crop budgets. Farmer saved seed or bin run seed is not allowed under the RR soybean seed technical contract. Ease of use, wide spectrum of weeds controlled and no-till options are major reasons farmers have switched to RR soybean.



In the near future other types of transgenic soybeans with end use traits can be expected. Some examples will be soybeans with various fatty-acid profiles for certain food and industrial uses, and altering soy protein for special feed and food uses. A system of identity preservation (IP) will need to be implemented by farmers and others to maintain variety purity for end users.

#### **Seed Quality**

The selection and use of high quality seed and matching disease package genetics to location are basic keys to optimize soybean yield. Stress development and maturation may reduce seed size, increase seed injury, and contribute to lowered germination.

Mechanical seed damage may be the greatest single cause of poor germination and low seedling vigor in soybean. Damage can occur at any point during harvesting, handling or seed processing. The least mechanical damage occurs at 12 to 14 percent moisture. Severe bruising and seed coat breakage may occur at higher or lower moisture content. Harvesting at a low moisture content (8 to 10 percent) following intermittent wet and dry periods can increase the amount of seed coat cracking. Frequent combine adjustments can compensate for changes in seed moisture during the day. Care must be taken during seed cleaning and conditioning to prevent seed damage. Use belt conveyors when possible, and if augers are used, keep them fully loaded. Seed should not be dropped onto bin floors or into steel truck boxes. Damage potential increases as temperature of the seed decreases.

The influence of soybean seed size on germination potential, early seedling vigor and crop yield is not always predictable. Seed of fairly uniform size with few very small or extremely large seed will reduce problems in precision planting.

Select soybean seed that is free of disease, seed coat cracking, splits and green immature seed. Use seed produced the previous crop year. Seed two years old or older usually has lower germination and less seedling vigor. Seedling vigor declines first when soybean seed deterioration occurs, then ability to establish a stand in the field declines and finally germination percentage declines. Therefore, when soybean germination percentage is low, the seedlot should be discarded because of probable lower seedling vigor and reduced yield potential.

#### **Seed Treatment**

Treating soybean seed with a fungicide or fungicide plus insecticide generally does not increase yield when high quality seed is planted under North Dakota conditions. Seed treatment benefits seedlots that are damaged by disease, frost, excessive seed coat breakage and age or in the circumstance where soybeans must be planted more than one year in a row. Seed lots that do not meet certification standards should not be planted.

Seed companies may routinely treat soybean seed with fungicides prior to bagging. Farmers planning to treat seed themselves should always follow fungicide/insecticide label directions as to rate and methods of treatment. Some fungicides that can be used with inoculates should be planted quickly, usually within 24 hours. Check NDSU Extension Service publication PP-622 for recommendations on current registered seed treatments.

#### **Inoculating Soybeans**

Soybean has the ability to fix nitrogen from the atmosphere if properly nodulated. Nodulation requires the inoculation of the seed prior to planting with certain species of rhizobium bacteria specific for soybean. Or, if the field has a previous history of soybean production, the rhizobium bacteria may already be present in the soil. Seed inoculation is highly recommended for North Dakota soils with no previous history of soybean planting. Inoculation of seed for fields having prior soybean history is suggested if new strains of bacteria are to be introduced. Also, inoculation of wheat the year before planting soybean on fields where soybeans have never been grown can also help prepare fields for soybeans. This has been demonstrated with limited research.

Several types of inoculum carriers are currently available for soybean seed treatment. One of the oldest and very common are the peat-based materials. Peat is a good carrier for soybean inoculum but does not adhere to the seed as well as some other materials. For best results, peat-based materials should be applied as a slurry and mixed with the seed, particularly when planting into ground without a previous soybean history. Clay-based materials can be applied dry and will stick to the seed. Clay-based materials become sticky when wet and can plug planters. Planter boxes should be left empty and cleaned each night when clay based inoculation products are used.

Granular inoculation materials can be applied separate from the seed through the granular insecticide hopper. Granular materials are more expensive but are usually very effective and are recommended for new soybean land.

Some liquid materials containing molybdenum plus a fungicide plus soybean inoculum are also being sold. Most fungicides reduce the viability of inoculum and the additive of molybdenum is generally not considered necessary for North Dakota soils. Soybean inoculum is more tolerant to thiram fungicide than to most other fungicides, however the length of time inoculum can survive in contact with thiram is not known. The advantage claimed for the liquid materials is the ease of application with a slurry seed treater. Soybean seed treated with carboxin should not be inoculated more than four hours prior to planting.

Some important factors that affect nodulation are the viability of the inoculum, the amount of rhizobium on the seed, and the soil nitrate level.

The viability of the soybean inoculum depends on storage time and storage conditions. Many commercial inoculum containers list the expiration date for the inoculum. Inoculum should be refrigerated or stored in a cool place prior to and after purchase. Inoculum is easily killed by direct sunlight so exposure of inoculated seed to sunlight or excessive heat should be avoided.

If peat based inoculum is used, a slurry should be made with materials such as sugar water or skim milk as a carrier. The slurry inoculum carrier should then be thoroughly mixed with the seed as close to planting time as possible. This method will greatly increase the number of rhizobium sticking to each seed.

Good nodulation usually will not occur in fields under extreme dry conditions or with high levels of residual soil nitrogen. Available soil nitrogen will be used in preference to the formation of nodules. Even so, seed planted in fields high in soil nitrate N should always be inoculated to provide a source of rhizobium for future crops.

#### **Seedbed Preparation**

Soybean can be grown on a wide range of soil types under various cultural practices. Because of seed size and physiology, soybean seeds require about 50% of the seed weight in moisture to germinate. Also, soybean is seeded only 1.0 to 1.5 inches deep. These factors explain why preparation of a firm, uniform seedbed is important for optimum stand establishment. Shallow spring tillage to kill weeds before planting is effective on fall tilled fields. Spring tillage usually is done just before planting. Several reduced tillage programs can be followed. Many farmers are growing soybean under a no-till program. Special planters or drills may be required to handle surface residue in no-till and some reduced tillage systems. Soybean, like other legume crops, has difficulty emerging through compacted layers and surface crusts.

#### **Fertilizing**

Soybean does best in fertile soil and makes good use of carryover fertilizer. Response to application of commercial fertilizer has been inconsistent under North Dakota growing conditions. If a soil test of the field or response in other crops indicates distinctly low phosphate availability, a band application by planter attachment of 10 to 30 pounds of phosphate per acre may be beneficial. Its recommended to build phosphorous levels in soils on the crop prior to soybeans.

Fields that have no prior soybean history may benefit from additional nitrogen fertilizer if the soil test shows less than 60 pounds per acre available in the top 24 inches at planting time. High nitrogen fertility circumvents the benefits of rhizobium bacteria as the bacteria will not convert atmospheric nitrogen when soil nitrogen is readily available to the plant.

Soybean without nodules or with ineffective nodules will respond to nitrogen like any other crop. Since legumes have the ability to fix nitrogen, inoculating soybean seed just before planting is important, especially on fields that have not recently been planted to soybean. Crop response to phosphorus and potassium are not always noticeable in the year of application.

Approximately 60 percent of the phosphorus and 50 percent of the potassium taken up by soybean plants is removed from the field when the seed is harvested. One bushel of soybean contains about three-fourths of a pound of P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> and over a pound of K<sub>2</sub>O per bushel.

Starter fertilizer is best placed in a band 2 inches to the side and 2 inches below the seed. "Pop-up" fertilizer, a small amount of fertilizer placed in direct contact with seed, should not be used on soybean because stand loss from fertilizer salt injury can result.

Micronutrient deficiency in soybean can be a problem on high pH soils. Iron chlorosis generally occur on high-lime soils and is the most commonly reported trace element deficiency in North Dakota. The typical iron deficiency (chlorosis) symptom is yellow leaves with green veins. Suggested foliar treatments to correct iron deficiency are (a) 20 pounds of ferrous sulfate in 100 gallons of water applied at 10 to 20 gallons per acre, or (b) 0.10 to 0.15 lbs/A of iron as iron chelate applied in water carrier at the second trifoliolate leaf stage. These treatments will usually eliminate deficiency symptoms but may not result in a profitable yield increase. NDSU research showed that application at the fourth trifoliolate stage never resulted in a soybean yield increase. However, research in southern Minnesota showed economical yield increases from foliar application of iron. Selecting varieties tolerant of high-lime soils can help counteract iron chlorosis. Some varieties are quite susceptible to iron chlorosis. Soybean has not responded to zinc fertilizer in eastern North Dakota and western Minnesota sites where the soil zinc level was above 1.0 ppm.

Soybean response to fertilizer has varied considerably. Experience on your farm is your best guide. Leave an unfertilized check strip for comparison. The use of foliar fertilization is not a substitute for a good soil fertility program of soil applied fertilizers and micronutrients. Consult NDSU Extension Service publication SF-1164, "Soybean Soil Fertility," for additional information.

### **Planting**

Soybean as any summer crop is susceptible to frost and prolonged exposure to near freezing conditions in spring and fall. Plant soybean after the soil has warmed to 50 F and air temperatures are favorable. Soybean planting generally should not be prior to five days before the average last killing frost. This provides less than a 50 percent chance of frost killing the soybean. Delaying seeding until after the average last frost date allows time to kill early germinating weeds with tillage. Earlier planting in cool, wet soil may result in low germination, increased incidence of seedling diseases and poor stands.

Planting dates between May 10 and 25 appear to be favorable for higher yields with a reduced risk of frost injury. Plant as early as the frost date permits on fields where weeds are not a serious problem so soybean can take full advantage of the entire growing season and produce maximum yields. Earlier seeding allows the use of full-season varieties which typically yield more than shorter season varieties.

Four years' data from date-of-planting studies at the NDSU Fargo Experiment Station show that late plantings had lower seed yields, poorer seed quality, lower oil content, shorter plant height, and pods set closer to the ground as compared to optimum planting dates. However, late planting may be justified where weed control is of primary importance. Some early maturing varieties have had acceptable yields when weather factors like hail, late spring frost, floods, etc., necessitate very late planting or replanting.

Planting in rows is the most common method used and permits cultivation for weed control. Seeding can be done with a row crop planter plus the proper plates, air planters, grain drills, and air seeders. The seed metering system of grain drills must be adjusted carefully to avoid seed damage. Plugging every other spout may be necessary with some drills to obtain uniform seeding of undamaged seeds. Plant to cover seed 1 to 1.5 inches deep and place the seed in moist soil. Planting deeper than two inches or in a soil that crusts may result in poor emergence.

### **Seeding Rate**

Soybean yields have not varied significantly over a wide range of plant populations. An ending plant population of approximately 150,000 plants per acre is desirable regardless of row spacing. One pound of medium sized soybean will contain about 2800 seeds. A bushel of soybean will produce about 150,000 plants per acre assuming 90 percent germination. This would give plants about 1.5 inches apart within the row at a 30-inch row spacing. Seed per pound in currently available varieties ranges from 2200 to 3400. Seeding rates should be based on the number of viable seeds planted per foot of row (Table 3).

**Table 3. Number of viable seeds per foot of row which will result in approximately 150,000 plants per acre.**

Row Spacing (inches)	Seed/ft. of row
30	9
24	7
20	6
15	5
12	4
10	3
6-7	2

High planting rates may cause yields to decrease in low rainfall years because of drought stress, and in good rainfall years high planting populations may lodge more than low populations. Low plant populations reduce lodging but contribute to low pod set and excessive branching. Extreme low seed number per foot of row may result in erratic stands due to a lack of seedling energy necessary to break the soil surface. This may be critical in solid seeded stands where soils are prone to crusting.

Seeding rates should be increased (5 to 7%) to compensate for unavoidable plant thinning such as with rotary hoeing for early season weed control. Slightly higher seeding rates may also be advantageous with June plantings or with no-till plantings, where soil temperatures are lower. If planting in narrow row spacings or solid seeding, it's suggested that soybean seeding rates be adjusted upward. Seeding rates of 175,000 seeds per acre in 12 to 15 inch spacings, and 200,000 seeds per acre when solid seeding (6 to 8 inch) spacings are recommended.

### **Row Spacing**

North Dakota soybean producers are planting soybean in narrower rows as a result of several NDSU research studies (1971-1986) at Casselton, Fargo, Oakes and northeastern North Dakota counties. The research demonstrated that higher yields of soybean can be obtained in narrow rows if stands are well established and weeds are adequately controlled (Table 4).

**Table 4. The effect of row spacing on soybean yields.**

Location	Years	Row Spacing Comparisons	Wide Row bu/A	Narrow Row bu/A	Increase bu/A	Increase %
Fargo	76-77'	30" vs. 6"	30.7	33.1	2.4	+8%
Casselton	75-75'	30" vs. 6"	17.1	22.0	4.9	+28%
Oakes*	71-72'	36" vs. 12"	34.6	45.6	11.0	+31%
NE N.Dak. **	84-86'	24" vs. 12"	24.4	28.1	3.7	+15%

\* Oakes \_ Irrigated trials

\*\* Six county sites \_ Walsh, Pembina, Cavalier, Ramsey, Nelson and Towner

These data demonstrate that narrow row soybean out-yielded wider spaced soybean by an average of 3 to 10 bu/A. Currently about 60 percent of soybean is planted in row spacings of 15 inches or less. However, as soybeans move into western regions of the state where dry condition in August are a concern, narrow row spacing may increase moisture-moisture loss from transpiration as compared to wider rows. In these drier regions, 30" rows or possibly skip row technology when planting with drills or air-seeders may be beneficial. This practice may also increase plant population in the row, thus lifting pod height on soybeans. Lower total plant population per acre in drier regions may lower low pod heights. The advantages for narrow row soybean generally are: increased yield, reduced erosion, increased harvesting efficiency and early crop canopy closure to help control weeds, and the convenience of using existing small grain equipment for some planting and harvesting operations. The primary disadvantages of narrow row production (solid seeding) are increased potential for weed and disease problems, seedling emergence problems if soil crusts easily, inability to use a row-crop cultivator and increased herbicide costs.

Close drilled or solid seeded soybean will produce satisfactory yields only if the land is relatively free of weeds, has good fertility and has adequate soil moisture during the pod filling portion of the growing season. Some weed control early in the season can be obtained with a harrow or rotary hoe, but mechanical weed control often is not satisfactory and chemical control is necessary for acceptable weed control in solid-seeded soybean. (See *Weed Control* section).

#### Rolling Soybean

The primary purpose of rolling soybean ground is to push rocks down into the soil surface and level the soil to allow a low combine cutter bar height during harvest. This will reduce harvest loss by cutting soybean stems below pods instead of cutting above or through low pods and leaving seeds in the field. Soybean fields are rolled after planting, either pre- or post-emergence. The advantage with rolling before the crop has emerged is improved seed-to-soil contact and reduced potential for plant injury. Disadvantages are increased potential for soil surface crusting and soil erosion. Rolling fields after the crop has emerged likely will cause plant injury such as cracked or broken stems. Plants will die if the stem is broken below the cotyledon leaves, due to loss of all growing points. Injured plants may be more susceptible to lodging and disease. Limited university research and farmer testimony indicates that rolling between the cotyledon and 1st trifoliolate stages of soybean may limit injury potential. Also, roll during the warmest part of the day on less turgid plants to minimize injury potential. If a producer plans to roll soybeans, then increasing seeding rate by 5% is suggested.

#### Weed Control

Soybean is a poor competitor with weeds when cool soil temperatures cause slow germination and reduced early season growth, but are good competitors in warmer soils when seed germination and seedling growth are rapid. Control of early weeds is one of the most critical components of a profitable soybean production system. Weed control during the first 2 to 4 weeks of the growing season is essential to maximize yield. Good cultural practices such as through seedbed preparation, adequate soil fertility, choice of a well-adapted variety, use of good quality, high germination seed free of weed seeds all contribute to a soybean crop which will compete with weeds. Finish seedbed preparation immediately prior to planting the crop to kill germinating weeds.

A rotary hoe or harrow can be used in both wide row and narrow row soybean to control emerging weeds. These tillage tools can be used to control weed seedlings after planting but before soybean emerges or after emergence when soybean is in the 1 to 2 trifoliolate leaf stage. Avoid using the harrow or rotary hoe when soybean seedlings are just emerging (cracking stage). The rotary hoe is an effective and economical weed control method when the ground is not trashy, lumpy or wet and weeds are emerging (not more than 0.25 inch tall). If little or no precipitation has occurred to activate preemergence herbicides, a rotary hoe or harrow may eliminate early flushes of weed seedlings and partially activate the herbicide to control subsequent flushes of weeds.

Many herbicides are available for weed control in soybean. Most are currently labeled for tank mixing with other herbicides for broad spectrum weed control. A number of commercial herbicide mixtures also are available for use in soybean.

An economical chemical weed control program involves a number of strategies and steps. These include (1) Identify weed species present as seedlings, older plants or potential weeds based on previous weed infestation problems. (2) Evaluate soil type, texture and organic matter content of each field to help in determining rates of soil applied herbicides. (3) Inspect, adjust and calibrate all herbicide applicators or banding equipment to insure accurate herbicide application and even distribution. (4) Read and follow label carefully when using herbicides or weed control. Soybean is susceptible to injury from 2,4-D, MCPA, dicamba, curtail, and picloram (Tordon) therefore, non-labeled herbicide drift into soybean fields should be avoided. Refer to NDSU Extension Service publication W-253, "Agricultural Weed Control Guide," for current information on herbicide rates, mixtures and use. Always read and follow label directions when using pesticides.

#### Soybean Aphids

Soybean aphids are small (approximately 1/16 inch long) soft-bodied insects and may be winged or wingless. Nymphs can be much smaller than adults. The soybean aphid is light yellow with black cornicles ("tail-pipes"). Winged adults will have a black head and thorax.

Buckthorn (*Rhamnus* spp.) is the only known overwintering host. Aphid eggs are very winter hardy and can survive extended periods of very cold temperatures. Soybean aphids hatch in the spring and are expected to have two to three generations of wingless females before a winged generation leaves the overwintering host in search of soybean.

Aphids suck sap from plants. When infestations are large, infested leaves are wilted or curled. Other symptoms of direct feeding damage may include plant stunting, reduced pod and seed counts, puckering and yellowing of leaves. The aphids excrete honeydew, a sweet substance that accumulates on surfaces of lower leaves and promotes the growth of sooty mold. Later, as the growing point slows, the aphids slow their reproductive rate, move down to the middle and lower part of the plant, and feed on the undersides of leaves, stems, and pods. Toward the end of the season the colonies begin to rapidly increase in number again. These increases are followed by the migration back to buckthorn.

Soybean aphids are capable of transmitting viruses during the feeding process. Several important viruses include alfalfa mosaic, soybean mosaic and bean yellow mosaic. Symptoms are frequently associated with specific fields. General symptoms of soybean viruses include plant stunting, leaf distortion and mottling, reduced pod numbers and seed discoloration. Infected seed is the most important means for introducing soybean mosaic virus into a field. These viruses occur at a very low incidence in North Dakota.

The guidelines for decisions on soybean aphid treatment are:

*Begin scouting soybean fields at the V3 to V4 stage to determine if soybean aphids are present in fields. No treatment is recommended at this time and is discouraged so insecticides do not reduce the presence of predators and parasites.*

The critical growth stage for making most soybean aphid treatment decisions appears to be the late vegetative to early reproductive (Vn to R2). Assessing aphid populations at this time is critical. Control results from other states to the east of North Dakota find that the best results from an aphid treatment occurred from mid July to early August. Treatment to manage soybean aphid would be recommended at early flowering (R1 to R2) when aphids are abundant on most plants (guideline: aphids number 25 or more per sampled leaflet). University of Wisconsin research trials found that a population of 200 aphids/plant during susceptible growth stages (R2 to R4) resulted in a yield loss of about 6 bushels/acre.

See NDSU Extension Service publication [E-1232 "Soybean Aphid, Management in North Dakota"](#) for more information and details on control and management.

### Harvesting

Timely, careful harvesting means extra bushels of soybean. Soybean is easy to thresh, but the challenge is to get all the soybean seed into the combine. Straight combining is the most satisfactory and commonly used method of harvest. Swathing soybean can result in excessive field losses (up to 25%) due to shattering. Use of equipment like floating headers, pickup reels, Love bars and row crop headers are helpful in reducing harvest losses. Keep the combine in good repair. A cutterbar in poor condition will increase gathering losses. Be sure knife sections and ledger plates are sharp, and that wear plates, hold-down clips and guards are properly adjusted. Proper reel speed in relation to ground speed will reduce gathering losses. Use a reel speed about 25 percent faster than ground speed. Operate the cutterbar as close to the ground as possible at all times. Keep forward speeds at or below 3 miles per hour. Slow down if stubble is high and ragged, or if separating losses are high. Approximately four beans or one to two pods per square foot represent a yield loss of "one bushel" per acre.

Harvest soybean when the plants are mature and the beans have approximately 14 percent moisture. Harvest may be started at 17 to 18 percent moisture when air drying is available. Harvest as much of the crop as possible above 12 percent moisture to avoid cracking seed coats and "splits". When soybean seed is extremely dry, (8 to 10 percent moisture), harvesting will cause more shattering and seed injury. Under these conditions, combine during morning or evening hours when relative humidity is higher and adjust the combine accordingly. Adjust cylinder concave clearance according to the operator's manual. When soybean plants and pods are tough, cylinder speed may have to be increased. Decrease cylinder speed as soybean seeds dry during midday to reduce breakage. Gramorie or sodium chlorate can be applied as a desiccant to aid harvesting if green weed growth delays harvest. Do not apply a desiccant until soybean moisture is under 30 percent and 65 percent of the seed pods have reached a mature brown color.

### Storing

Soybean may be stored safely for short periods during cold weather with a moisture content as high as 14 percent. For safe storage during the spring or summer, soybean should not contain more than 12 percent moisture. An air screen cleaner to remove foreign material, weed seeds and fines should be used before applying air and heat to soybean. Sound beans, free of foreign material and splits, store better and stay in condition longer. The maximum drying temperature for soybean is about 140 F. When soybean is to be used for seed, the temperature should not exceed 105 F. In drying soybean, a grower is seldom confronted with removing more than 2 or 3 points of moisture.

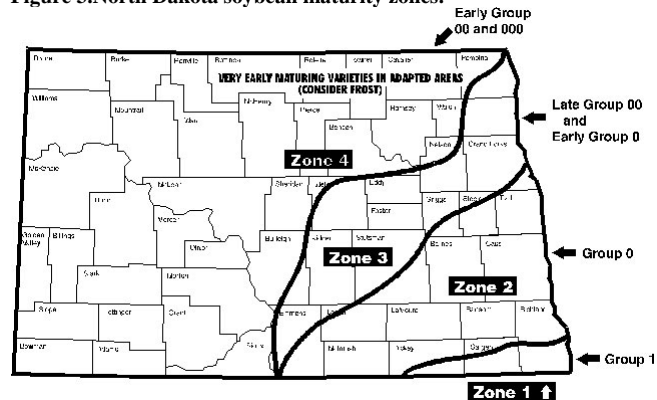
### Utilization

The soybean seed contains about 20 percent oil and 34 to 36 percent protein. These two components determine the economic worth of the soybean seed. Soybean has been called the "Cinderella Crop" in the U.S. because of its rapid expansion the past 30 years. For over one hundred years soybean has been called "The Meat of The Fields" in the Orient.

Farmers and animal feeders worldwide have benefitted from the expansion of soybean production, as people around the world strive to improve their diets. This is being accomplished through increased animal productivity and use of soy protein directly in human consumption. Availability of large supplies of soy oil helped the food industry develop and market many new food products.

Increased production the past few years suggests that soybean is a viable permanent crop in North Dakota. This unique cash crop fits well into North Dakota small grain and corn cropping rotations.

Figure 3. North Dakota soybean maturity zones.



For more information on this and other topics, see: [www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu](http://www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu)

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