

Feature Story



Weather woes: How fungicides can help

Each season, growers across the country face adverse weather conditions that impact the health and yield of their crops. These conditions can include too little or too much rain, extreme temperatures, wind and hail. Plain and simple, weather is a wild card.

“While growers can’t control the weather, they can control their crop protection plans,” said Nick Fassler, Technical Marketing Manager, BASF. “When up against Mother Nature, the best thing to do is to be proactive.” Proactivity is a tried and true tenet of weed control. Early application of herbicides helps to prevent weeds from emerging, increasing yield potential and crop health.

The same is true for disease. Proactive fungicide applications can help protect crops against yield-robbing diseases, which can further decrease yield potential after a severe weather event. In addition to controlling disease, proactive fungicide applications can increase growth efficiency and stress tolerance. This allows plants to better utilize nitrogen fertilizer and conduct photosynthesis more efficiently, which can lead to increased yield potential. Prepared growers are better suited to protect their crops and increase yield potential.

Wet conditions

Wet weather, especially early in the season, fosters disease potential and can cause growers to get off on the wrong foot. Disease inoculum that overwintered in soil can thrive in these conditions, increasing the chance for diseases like gray leaf spot and anthracnose in corn and Frogeye leaf spot and Septoria brown spot in soybeans. Good options for disease control are Headline AMP® fungicide in corn and Priaxor® fungicide in soybeans.

“When facing wet weather, prompt and frequent scouting is essential,” said Fassler. “Keep an eye on your fields and be ready to make a timely fungicide application.”

Dry conditions

Growers lose productivity with hot, dry weather. Plants shut down in the afternoon under drought-like conditions and do not capture and utilize sunlight as efficiently. Such stress can be harmful for plants and can compromise growth efficiency.

Dry weather typically brings lighter disease pressure because the environment diseases thrive in is absent, but growers should still be aware and diligent about scouting their fields regardless. Rust species are more aggressive in dry-weather situations, and common disease culprits like gray leaf spot and northern corn leaf blight may still creep up.

“Proactive fungicide applications can put crops in a better position when facing dry conditions,” said Fassler. “The disease and plant health benefits can help reduce stress on the plant.”

Severe weather

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When facing severe weather, especially hail, adequate crop protection will be essential in mitigating damage and disease, and promoting plant health. This is especially true in corn. In these situations, growers can make a proactive application of Headline AMP® fungicide.

In addition to disease control, Headline AMP fungicide can provide improved growth efficiency and tolerance to stressors like hail, and improve stalk standability.

“Golf-ball-sized hail is bad news for both our windshields and our cornfields,” said Fassler. “Hail can drastically reduce leaf surface area for photosynthesis, and the resulting wounds can provide entry points for pathogens.”

In terms of yield, loss can vary greatly based on the growth stage and amount of damage. Many universities have excellent resources for estimating potential yield loss due to hail.

The bottom line

With all the weather unknowns of spring and summer, growers need to do all they can to promote high yield potential. Applications of Headline AMP fungicide in corn and Priaxor fungicide in soybeans can deliver the protection and plant health benefits needed to carry a strong crop through harvest.

Every farmer wants to increase profitability with as little risk as possible. Proactive fungicide use can help to accomplish this. For more information on fungicides and proactive planning, visit www.agproducts.basf.us.

Always read and follow label directions.

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