

Adoption of Sugarcane Recommendations

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Relevance

Sugarcane was grown on approximately 431,300 acres in Louisiana in 2016. The economic impact of the sugar industry is great as it ranks as one of the highest valued row crops in the state. The total value of sugar production in Louisiana exceeded \$819 million dollars in 2016. This value was extremely important to the economies of the 24 parishes where it is grown, processed into raw sugar, and further processed into refined sugar products. Refined sugar products leaving Louisiana are purchased in at least 25 states.

Research conducted by the LSU AgCenter, USDA-ARS, and American Sugar Cane League is vital for sustaining Louisiana sugar producer and processing operations. When new sugarcane varieties are released, disseminating performance and management information is vital towards their adoption. Innovative research and adoption of new technologies and management practices has kept Louisiana's sugarcane growers and sugar processors in business. AgCenter education efforts play a vital role in the adoption of new research practices. An Extension survey of sugarcane producers in the summer of 2016 was conducted to confirm the scope of adoption rates.

Response

The LSU AgCenter has an ongoing sugarcane educational program whereby county agents visit farms to counsel sugarcane producers on specific problems, organize group grower meetings, field days, and demonstrations to disseminate information on the latest production technology, and use written materials and radio and television programs to reach producers and other users of sugarcane crop information. The AgCenter has played a major role in influencing the decisions of producers regarding various management practices involving sugarcane production and its processing into raw sugar. This influence is monitored periodically in a quantitative manner by the AgCenter to provide better educational programs to its stakeholders. The AgCenter and other research organizations maintain close working relationships with consultants and agricultural dealers.

Results

A survey was conducted and summarized in the summer of 2016. The survey was sent via email to 447 sugarcane producers and processors, crop consultants, among others in the sugarcane growing region of south Louisiana. A total of 175 surveys (39.1%) were completed and returned. For this survey, 73.1% of the respondents were growers, 4.0% were millers, 4.6% were workers in governmental agencies, 4.6% were crop consultants, and 7.4% were dealer representatives. Responses were recorded from 18 parishes. The

following results indicated the percentage of producers that have adopted or are considering adopting various sugarcane production practices:

Adoption Practices	Agree	Disagree
	-----% -----	
I adopt new sugarcane varieties because yield performance data is available	90.9	9.1
I adopt new sugarcane varieties because traits other than yield are well characterized	95.8	4.2
I do NOT plant more than 50% of a single variety	92.7	7.3
I follow prescribed agricultural burn practices	99.2	0.8
I use soil testing to build my fertilizer program	91.7	8.3
I applied lime in the last 5 years to adjust soil pH	85.0	15.0
I apply fungicides, if needed, for the control of brown rust	89.3	10.7
I feel confident that I can control new weed problems as they arise, such as black nightshade	60.3	39.7
I feel confident that I will be able to control the Mexican rice borer when it is found on my farm	61.7	39.3
On-going state and federal budget cuts jeopardize the level of research-extension support needed for the Louisiana sugar industry	94.2	5.8

A total of 76% of the respondents indicated that they used information obtained from the LSU AgCenter when making decisions regarding their farming and/or milling operation; respondents indicated a similar percentage (79%) obtained information from local crop consultants. About 18% of the respondents indicated they obtained information from publications and only 14% obtained information from internet web sites. When asked about a preference for receiving information, 71% responded electronic/internet/email (this might be high since only people with internet access were surveyed). A total of 74% of the respondents preferred person-to-person interactions for information. The next rating preferences for receiving information were small group meetings, field days, and regular mail outs (59%, 53%, and 33%, respectively).

These results indicate the importance of person-to-person contacts in the Louisiana sugar industry. It is also apparent that as technology becomes increasingly available that electronic information delivery will continue to increase in importance. Agents, specialists, and researchers must continue to build strong working relationships with crop consultants. The AgCenter, through extension programs, has a large and positive influence for the adoption of management decisions for many Louisiana sugarcane producers.