Researchers, Farmers Form Winning Team
With Crop Demonstration Program

Farmers, researchers and agricultural professionals across the state have formed a winning team in the LSU AgCenter's On-Farm Crop Demonstration Program.

Officials say the program's success is one reason for its growing popularity.

"We are bringing the research generated at research stations to farmers," said Dr. David Lanclos, LSU AgCenter soybean, corn and grain sorghum specialist. "The Crop Demonstration Program has grown to be one of the largest and most successful programs in the country."

The program allows professionals to create outdoor classrooms in farmers' fields across the state – places where they can demonstrate proven technology and showcase the production concepts being tested in corn, soybean and grain sorghum fields.

These crop demonstrations are larger than traditional research plots, represent real-world production and help LSU AgCenter county agents, specialists and other experts share information with farmers to help them keep their operations profitable.

Through the efficient use of volunteers, the crop demonstration program has expanded from 30 farm locations in 2003 to 91 in 2007.

To further enhance the educational mission, farmers are joining the team by offering land and equipment to be used in the Crop Demonstration Program. Seed companies also are providing seed to test new varieties and hybrids, agricultural agents are providing leadership in selecting farm locations, and company representatives are pledging their support to enhance the successful program.

Through the years, the program has expanded to test more varieties, evaluate fertilizers, study the benefits of lime, establish planting dates, demonstrate new equipment, test disease and nematode control methods, establish insect management techniques, test irrigation methods, compare tillage methods, compare harvesting techniques, study the use of yield monitors and global position systems, and incorporate precision agricultural practices in farming.

These enhanced studies are readily accepted by farmers and industry leaders, because they are planted on commercial farms throughout the crop-producing areas of the state, experts say.

"We only plant varieties in these replicated core blocks that make the LSU AgCenter recommended list," Lanclos said. "And the recommended varieties have been extensively tested in small plots at research stations in the state for a minimum of two years."

The real-world results over the years have led to even greater interest in the program.

"The response by farmers to the program has been outstanding," said LSU AgCenter county agent Keith Collins of Richland Parish.

The wealth of data collected from the large plots on different farms gives good information about soil types and cultural practices under different farming methods, Collins explained.

"We use the data to prepare a regional report for farmers in Northeast Louisiana, and they like the localized information," Collins said, adding, "Many of the farmers in the area are benefiting from the information obtained from the program."

Louisiana farmers recently have set new yield records in the production of soybeans and other grain crops in the state. Experts say some of this success could be the result of farmers planting improved varieties and adopting proven production techniques on their farms.

Ken Fairchild, who farms soybeans and corn in East Carroll and West Carroll parishes, has cooperated in the program. He harvested an average of 79 bushels of soybeans and 180 bushels of corn per acre last year.

"The Crop Demonstration Program is a great one," said Fairchild. "I especially like the team who walks through the fields to check for plant problems.

"Perhaps, if they find a problem in the test plots, they can help me handle it in my crop before it gets too severe," he said.

Fairchild said he hopes to be a part of the Crop Demonstration Program team for "many years to come" and that "the program is well worth the investment."

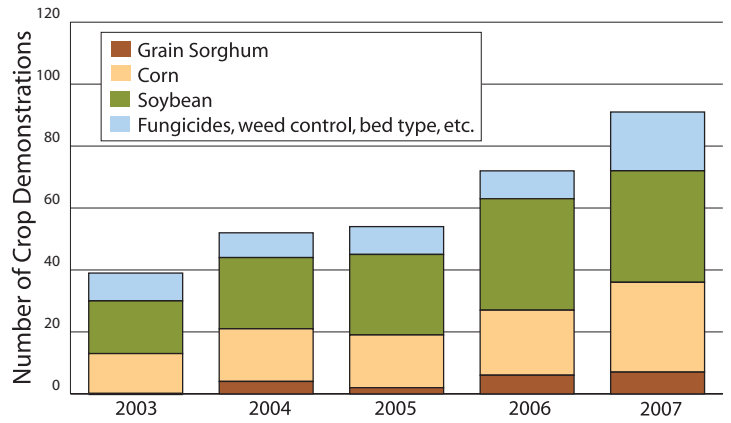
Farmers can observe the benefits of selecting an improved variety or altering production practices in the Crop Demonstration Program because the tests are planted in fields near their commercial operations.

"This program is a win-win situation," Lanclos said, adding, "The program depends on the cooperation of farmers, seed companies and county agents and adds a local flavor to research being conducted by the LSU AgCenter." John Chaney

Photo by John Chaney

LSU AgCenter research associate Rob Ferguson loads a planter hopper with corn seed to plant as part of a crop demonstration project located in a field near Alexandria. The crop demonstration program allows farmers an opportunity to observe numerous corn varieties being planted in their fields. Ferguson works with LSU AgCenter soybean specialist Dr. David Lanclos.

Figure 1. 2003 to 2007 Crop Demonstrations Totals.



The number of crop demonstration projects has grown substantially over the years.

Louisiana Soybean & Grain Research & Promotion Board
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Table 1. 2007 Crop Demonstrations

Parish	Grain Sorghum (Milo)	Bt Roundup Ready Corn	Roundup Ready Corn	Soybeans, Maturity Group 3	Soybeans, Maturity Group 4	Soybeans, Maturity Group 5	Louisiana Soybean Research Verification Program	Corn Fungicide Tests	Soybean Fungicide Tests	Raised Bed Versus Flat Land Soybean Planting
Acadia					X		X			X
Avoyelles	X		X			X	X		X	
Beauregard	X	X	X		X	X				
Caldwell		X								
Concordia	X	X	X		X	X	X	XXX		
East Carroll		XX	X	X	X		X			
Evangeline										XX
Franklin		X			X					
Iberia				X	X					
Jeff Davis						X			XX	X
Madison			X		X					
Morehouse	X	X	X		X					
Ouachita		X	X		X					
Pointe Coupee		X	X	X	X	X		X		
Rapides	X		X					X		
Dean Lee Research	X	X		X	X	X		X	XX	
Richland		X	X	X	XX			X		
St. Landry	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
St. Martin										
Tensas		X	X		X			X		
West Baton Rouge							X			
West Carroll		XX	XX	X	X		X			
Totals	**7**	**15**	**14**	**6**	**16**	**7**	**7**	**9**	**6**	**4**