

Soybeans, September 13, 2002

## **FALL HERBICIDES NEW TO THE MID SOUTH**

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**IMPORTANT NOTE:** This article is targeted to Southeast Missouri and Southward. Folks in Northern Missouri may disagree. There have been some ads for fall-applied herbicides running on local radio stations- primarily for preemergence soybean herbicides. These ads used to be limited to Mizzou football games where they trickled down from Northern parts of Missouri. In the Midwest, ag-chem companies promote fall application of herbicides as a conservation tillage "burndown" strategy. The promotions have been running for many years; however, this strategy never caught on in the South..

This strategy looks great on paper; it offers the following:

- A wide application window in the Fall
- Implied time savings in the Spring.
- Better drying and warming of the soil.
- Reductions of insect problems at planting.
- Control of some otherwise-difficult weeds.

However, the strategy has a few drawbacks, the first of which is that the fall herbicide keeps the soil bare and erosion-prone through the winter. Ironically, some of our growers plant cover crops to stop wind erosion and this strategy works for the opposite result. Also, many fall herbicide applications will lock you into soybeans, and most growers like rotational flexibility.

However, the key question is if this strategy is economical- and to be economical, the fall herbicide application needs to replace or displace burndown herbicides. That's where the system falls on its face. Given our warmer and wetter winters, the fall applied herbicides are unlikely to last until planting time. Things warm up in February, and if the herbicide is gone, new weeds start growing and you wind up burning down just like always. In other words, the fall herbicide doesn't really change your spring burndown program.

I once heard a Northern Missouri grower brag on fall applications; however, remember their winter weather when so often, they're 25 degrees and snowing and we're 50 and have a flood watch.

The fall application strategy has been around for upwards of ten years. Until now, promotions did not get South of St. Louis. In Southeast Missouri, you will most likely need a full-fledged

burndown even with a fall herbicide. If the fall herbicide were free, I'd recommend it- the concept is great. However, more often than not, it's just an added expense.