

Research vital to Texas peanut industry

LUBBOCK, Texas – Decades of important research has allowed Texas peanut farmers to be profitable in a difficult and challenging growing environment.

“The climate in Texas makes growing peanuts more challenging,” said Shelly Nutt, executive director for the Texas Peanut Producers Board (TPPB). “Diseases are becoming more predominant and water resources have become more and more limited. Research is vital in helping our Texas growers succeed.”

For more than 40 years, TPPB has annually allotted over half of its grower-funded checkoff budget for peanut research, including a peanut breeding plot in Brownfield, Texas that develops different peanut varieties.

Peanut varieties are developed to improve resistance to pests and diseases, as well as better quality peanuts that are more drought tolerant and have a high potential for yield and grade in the arid Texas environment.

“We have one of the strongest research teams in the country and great support from our growers,” Nutt said. “If it weren’t for grower’s contributions through our voluntary checkoff, there would be no peanut research in Texas.”

Jaime Ayers, research technician for Texas AgriLife Extension in Lubbock, and the farm manager for the breeding program in Brownfield, said the program is seeing promising material in both the runner and Spanish lines.

“We’re actively breeding for numerous traits, including higher yield and maturity, and more resistance against the Sclerotinia and tomato spotted wilt virus diseases.” Ayers said. “We’re also trying to improve internal traits of peanuts and peanut oil.”

Since 1974, there have been 14 different peanut varieties released, including five Spanish and eight Florunner varieties. Due to the introduction of these varieties, peanut yields increased and diseases became more manageable.

In the early 1970s, peanut yields in Texas jumped 15-20 percent when peanut acreage changed from Spanish peanuts to Florunner.

The ‘80s resulted in the development of two devastating peanut diseases called Sclerotinia blight and tomato spotted wilt virus. At the height of these diseases, growers suffered complete losses with some losing entire fields.

Through TPPB funding, the breeding program has provided growers with peanut variety options that are disease resistant, which has allowed them to maintain yields in the absence or presence of devastating diseases at a greatly reduced risk.

To maximize future peanut yields, the program is developing and testing 10 new lines that are expected to be released in the next three to four years.

For more information about peanut research, contact the Texas Peanut Producers Board at (800) 734-0086.

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