

Development of an Extension Program on Management of Peanut Diseases in West Texas.

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Introduction

Historically peanut losses incurred by fungal diseases have been minimal on the Southern High Plains of Texas. More recently, however, diseases such as Sclerotinia blight, Rhizoctonia and Pythium pod rot, Botrytis blight, and Verticillium wilt have greatly impacted production in this region. Producers in the Rolling Plains must combat other diseases such as leaf spot, limb rot and southern blight. With the relocation of the Extension Plant Pathologist position to Lubbock from Stephenville, many of the problems affecting these regions can be addressed over the next several years. This goal of this project was to initiate an Applied Research-based Extension Program that will address current and emerging peanut disease issues in West Texas.

Discussion

Because this position was not filled until July 1, 2006, there was little time to design and implement field experiments that would be useful in addressing disease issues. However, much headway was made establishing relationships with persons involved in peanut production; including County Extension Agricultural Agents, Extension Integrated Pest Management Agents, crop consultants, chemical industry personnel, as well as individual producers from Gaines, Terry, Bailey, Parmer, Yoakum, Lamb, Hockley, Collingsworth, Wilbarger, Haskell, Comanche, Frio, and Atascosa counties. Additional contacts were made through participating in meetings with the Dawson County Ag Committee, the Hale County crop tour, the AG-CARES Tour, attending meetings sponsored by the Texas Peanut producers Board, a Farm Bill Discussion Session, and the 2006 Big 'Ole Peanut Tour. A Peanut Disease Overview was given at the Texas Agricultural Association Ag. Chem. Conference. In addition a Fungicide Utility and Preservation presentation was made on the South Texas Peanut Tour, and turn-row meetings in Gaines and Terry counties. Laboratory and greenhouse experiments have been established to evaluate efficacy of fungicides for control of Botrytis blight. Additional studies are also being established to develop an identification method which may aid in distinguishing between *Botrytis cinerea* (causal agent of Botrytis blight) and *Sclerotinia minor* (causal agent of Sclerotinia blight).