

Suwannee Valley Watermelon Crop Update- June 2, 2019

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Input decisions while winding down the season

This week's message is related to strategies for fertilizer and spray programs as you approach the end of the season.

When can you reduce the costs for the fungicide programs? I was in watermelon fields a good bit last week and I was happy to **not** see much active progression of diseases, especially not much activity from downy mildew. My observations from last week give me more confidence that we can begin to reduce fungicide inputs in certain fields. If fields are within a week of being harvested for the final time, then certainly, you do not to invest in fungicides at all assuming the field does not have an active disease progression in that field. If fields have 2 harvests left, then at least you probably will not need the expensive fungicides for gummy stem blight, downy mildew or even powdery mildew. One strategy for fields that still have 2 weeks or more left is to spray mancozeb (Manzate or Penncozeb) (5 day preharvest interval) immediately after you complete a harvest as long as you have 5 days before the next harvest. The same strategy with tebuconazole could be used except it has a 7 day preharvest interval. I give you these thoughts with caution and suggest you still scout the fields for new active disease pressure. If new disease pressure is present, especially downy mildew or powdery mildew, then you still have short preharvest interval materials that can be used, but it seems unlikely you will need them based on what we are all seeing now.

The more difficult suggestion is what to do with rindworm sprays if you still have 2-3 weeks left to the end. This depends greatly on whether you are seeing any damage and what sprays have been used recently. If you are seeing some level of damage, you may want to consider continuing a spray program for the rindworm complex if more than 1-2 weeks are left.

Likewise, fertilizer inputs should already have been reduced once harvests started. Once you get to 7-10 days to last harvest, you will not benefit from additional fertilizer inputs. If you have 10 days or more left, you can use a lower rate of 1.0-1.5 lbs per acre per day rate for nitrogen and potash until you reach that final 7-10 days.

Call us if you have specific questions.