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Sustainability on Display at Pa. Farm

International soy buyers examine sustainability practices

ELVERSON, Pa. (October 2, 2017) – Buyers of U.S. soy are increasingly concerned about the sustainability of the products they buy. A group of international soy buyers from Southeast Asia and Europe got a first-hand look at the sustainability of U.S. soy during a visit to Beam Farms in Chester County, Pa. on September 27.

The sustainability of U.S. soy is an important differentiating factor separating U.S. soy from its competitors in the international and domestic marketplace, and is one of the soy checkoff's strategic objectives. The international buyers' tour, coordinated by the [U.S. Soybean Export Council \(USSEC\)](#), was designed to build preference for U.S. soy by demonstrating that the U.S. soy crop is produced under a system of sustainability that includes everything from soil and water conservation to energy use.



Bill Beam (right) met with international soy buyers to discuss the sustainability practices on his farm.

Bill Beam, a farmer-leader who serves as chair of the Pennsylvania Soybean Board, welcomed more than a dozen guests from Thailand, South Korea, Taiwan, the U.K. and Holland to his farm to explain the practices he uses to ensure sustainability. Beth Sassaman, District Conservationist, USDA-NRCS, from the Coatesville Office and Jessica Gerhart, Executive Director of the Farm Service Agency (USDA), Chester-Delaware, outlined the services provided to farmers through the Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) program, which provides voluntary conservation technical assistance in planning and implementing conservation systems. Del Voight, Penn State Extension educator and crop specialist, was also on hand to answer questions about the conservation and nutrient management plans used by the state's soybean growers.

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Beam invited the international buyers to his fields as he outlined the sustainable farming practices implemented on his farm, including crop rotation and variety selection, the use of cover crops for water management, reduced and no-till, as well as pest management and nutrient management. Of particular interest to the group was the use of precision farming to increase on-farm efficiency. A number of the buyers took the opportunity to ride with Beam in his combine to see the yield mapping technology in action.

“I see sustainability as a three-legged stool,” Beam told the group. “To stay in business, I have to be profitable. Second, I have to be concerned with conservation – taking care of the soil that will take care of me. And third, I’m always looking to improve. U.S. farmers are external optimists, and constant improvement is something we’re always after – in our machinery, in our soil, and in the protein and quality of our beans.”



[A dozen international soy buyers visited the U.S. to learn about the sustainability practices of U.S. farms.](#)

During their week-long U.S. trip, the international buyers group spent time in Washington, D.C. at the office of the USDA National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Due to the variation of land and climate throughout the U.S., sustainability looks a bit different on every farm, so following their stop at Beam Farms, the group traveled to the Midwest. There, the group visited with a grower to see the sustainability practices on his farm near Indianapolis and talked with representatives of the Indiana Soybean Alliance, the statewide checkoff organization that serves Indiana soybean farmers.

According to the United Soybean Board, based on existing aggregated data collected from farmers nationwide who participate in national conservation programs, currently, 98 percent of U.S. soybeans are certified sustainable.

About the Pennsylvania Soybean Board

The [Pennsylvania Soybean Board](#) is a farmer-controlled Board responsible for managing Pennsylvania’s share of funds received from the nationwide Soybean Checkoff program. The funding is available under an assessment program, approved by Congress in 1990, under which soybean farmers contribute 50 cents of every \$100 they receive for their beans at the first point of sale. Funds are used to develop markets, educate consumers, and research new ways to utilize and produce soybeans more efficiently.