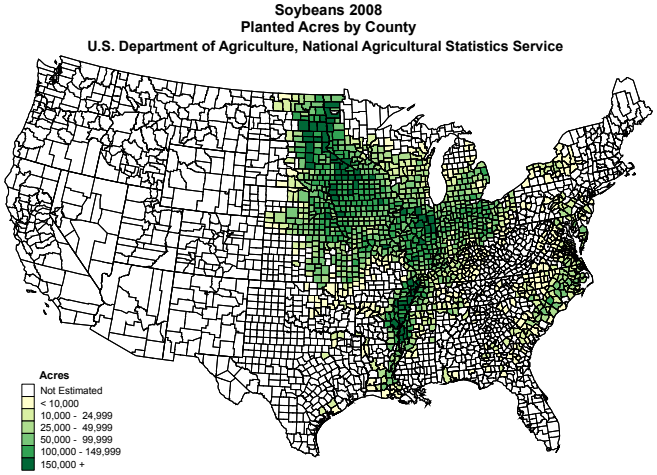
American Soybean Association - International Marketing

TEN REASONS

Why U.S. soybeans are sustainable

1 Soybeans are grown on nearly 80 million acres in the U.S. More than 90% of this acreage is planted with herbicide tolerant, biotech enhanced soybeans that enable farmers to increasingly practice no-till or conservation tillage.



2 Through the no-till production method, seeds are planted directly into the soil, through the previous crop residue. This reduces the need for energy-consuming deep plowing and multiple cultivation operations with heavy equipment.

3 The reduction in deep-plowing greatly diminishes soil erosion and moisture loss. Since the introduction of herbicide tolerant soybeans in 1996, no-till use has increased dramatically on U.S. soybean farms.

Soybean plants emerging through the previous year's corn crop residue

4 Herbicide tolerant soybeans enable greater weed control and greatly reduce the amount of agricultural chemicals needed compared to conventional production. Biotech soybeans enable crop rows to be planted closer - as close as seven inches instead of the conventional 30 inches - because farmers no longer need room between rows for mechanical weed control.

5 No-till allows the residue from the previous crop to be left in the fields. This organic residue eventually breaks down and passes into the soil. This means that for the first time in the history of agriculture, farmers increase the amount of topsoil in their fields in a given growing season.

6 Narrow row planting enables soybeans to grow so close together that the plants form a canopy that keeps down weed pressure and also helps to retain more moisture in the soil. This is critical during periods of drought.

7 Reducing the need for heavy cultivation equipment leads to less soil compaction. This is good for earthworm populations and moisture containment and also greatly reduces water runoff from the field into waterways.

Narrow row planting forms a canopy that naturally controls weed growth

8 Reduction in time spent cultivating and 'crossing the field' greatly reduces fuel use. This results in a substantial cut in greenhouse gas emissions from no-till fields by as much as 88%.

9 Biotech enhanced soybeans provide greater weed control resulting in less toxic weed seed in the harvested crop. This increases safety for consumers and animal feed.

10 U.S. soybeans are grown on prime farmland. U.S. soybean production causes no forest loss or degradation. Indeed, there are more trees in the U.S. today than 100 years ago. Farmers have documented improved biodiversity and more birds and insect life on their no-till farmland. The use of biotech and no till, means sustainable soybean science and nature are working together in harmony to maintain efficient farms and thus sustain rural economies.

ASA-IM Statement of Sustainability

As defined by the U.S. Congress in the 1990 “Farm Bill,” sustainable agriculture is an integrated system of plant and/or animal production practices having a site-specific application that will, over the long term:

- Satisfy human food and fiber needs
- Enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agricultural economy depends
- Make the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm resources and integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls
- Sustain the economic viability of farm operations
- Enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole.
- Remain economically viable, because without profitability, it is not sustainable

The American Soybean Association–International Marketing and its predecessor the American Soybean Association (ASA) have a longstanding history of assisting U.S. soybean farmers in production practices that are sustainable as defined by the U.S. Congress. In 1998, ASA and USDA published the book entitled “Soybean Management and the Land: A Best Management Practices Handbook for Growers,” which promoted the adoption of conservation tillage practices.

These practices have dramatically increased with the introduction of biotech soybean seeds, thus allowing farmers to greatly expand the practice of no-till production. As a direct result, U.S. soybean farmers are seeing decreased soil erosion, increased amounts of carbon-into-soil sequestration rates, thereby decreasing emissions of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

U.S. farmers have long been and will continue to be leaders in protecting our natural resources and the environment, while producing an abundant food supply for distribution in the United States and throughout the world. ASA-IM continues to address sustainable agriculture and will continue its close relations with U.S. soybean farmers so they may remain at the forefront in practicing sustainable soybean production methods.

ASA
American Soybean Association
International Marketing®

For more information on why U.S. soybeans are more sustainable than ever, please contact ASA–IM Headquarters at:

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The activities of the American Soybean Association–International Marketing to expand international markets for U.S. soybeans and soy products are made possible by producer checkoff dollars invested by the United Soybean Board and various State Soybean Councils, support from cooperating industry, and through the American Soybean Association's investment of cost-share funding provided by USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service.

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