

As Fungicide Season Moves from Discussion to Decision

Across much of the Renk sales area, fungicide season in corn and soybeans is no longer a planning conversation. It is an active decision window. Some acres are already being sprayed. Others are being watched closely as fields move into tassel, early silking, flowering, and beginning pod. That makes this a good week to simplify the discussion. The question is not whether fungicides can work. The question is where they still fit, what conditions deserve quicker action, and which acres should probably not be forced into a pass just because the calendar says it is fungicide time.

This also feels like one of those weeks when general disease talk can outrun actual field conditions. That usually happens when the topic is timely and the crop is entering a sensitive stage. A better approach is to sort fields by crop stage, disease pressure, field history, and remaining yield potential. When those pieces line up, fungicide can still be one of the in-season management tools. When they do not, the recommendation gets harder to defend.

Corn

Corn should still get the first look in many geographies because a lot of acres are entering or approaching the highest-value fungicide window right now. The long-standing emphasis has been that the main leaves worth protecting are the ear leaf and the leaves above it, because those leaves contribute roughly 75 to 90 percent of the carbohydrates needed for grain fill. This is one reason tassel through early silking remains the practical decision window in so many agronomy conversations.

Start scouting immediately prior to tasseling. Check lower leaves up through the ear leaf. If disease is not present below the ear leaf, a fungicide application may not be warranted, and weekly scouting may be a better move than reacting too early. That fits the broader Midwest reality well. Fungicides are not especially forgiving when they are applied too early, and most products are effective for only about 14 to 21 days. Since corn still has a long stretch from silking to maturity, early sprays can lose value before the crop reaches its most important grain fill period.



A few corn checks matter right now

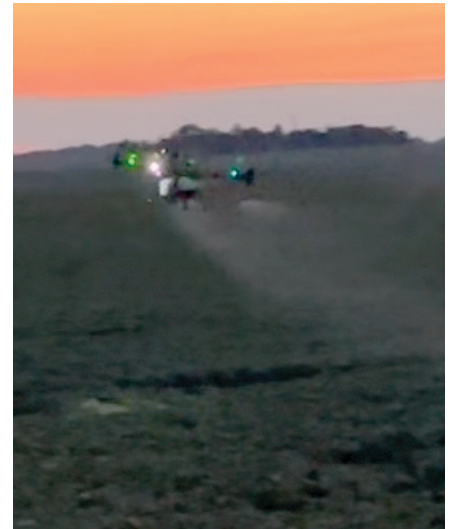
- Confirm actual crop stage by field, not just by windshield appearance.
- Start with corn-on-corn, higher-residue, and more disease-prone hybrid situations first, because those fields carry more foliar disease risk in a typical Midwest system.
- Watch whether lesions are staying well below the ear leaf or beginning to move into the part of the canopy that matters most during grain fill.
- Keep the duration of protection in mind. A spray made too early may not still be carrying enough activity when disease risk matters most.
- Be realistic about field potential. Fungicide protects stronger corn better than it rescues stressed corn.

The main point in corn is still discipline. It is easy to talk a field into a fungicide application when disease discussion gets loud. It is more useful to ask whether the field has the disease setup, crop stage, and yield potential that give the pass a reasonable chance to return.

Soybeans

Soybeans deserve the same kind of discipline, even if the conversation usually trails corn. Across much of the region, the key soybean question is whether fields are moving into the R3 window with enough disease risk and enough yield potential left to justify a fungicide trip. That is usually a better question than simply asking whether fungicide is being applied nearby.

That matters in soybeans because fungicide decisions are often influenced by habit. A clean-looking field can still be treated because the operation usually sprays beans at a certain stage. But resistance-management principles argue for a more selective approach. Tank mixes with different modes of action, avoiding reduced rates, and keeping applications tied to real disease pressure are all part of protecting chemistry performance over time.



A few soybean checks matter right now

- Focus first on fields nearing the main reproductive fungicide window and with a history of foliar disease pressure.
- Prioritize fields where canopy density, field history, and longer periods of leaf wetness are more likely to support disease development.
- Keep scouting consistent enough that fungicide decisions are tied to incidence and severity, not just to habit or timing on the calendar.
- Avoid reduced rates and avoid leaning on the same mode of action repeatedly, especially where multiple passes are being discussed.
- Treat fungicide as a crop-protection tool, not an automatic bonus-bushel pass.

Soybean fungicide can still fit very well in the right fields. The better message this week is simply to stay selective. Build the recommendation from disease threat, field history, and crop stage rather than from routine alone.

What likely happens next

For the next seven to ten days, fungicide activity will likely remain in corn and continue to build in soybeans as more acres move into the reproductive window. The strongest near-term fit should remain in corn fields at tassel or early silking where foliar disease is present or likely to move into the upper canopy. Soybean decisions will stay more variable from one field to the next because disease development is often less uniform and stewardship matters more when pressure is not yet obvious.

This is why the most useful agronomy conversations right now are still the simpler ones. Rank fields. Confirm stage. Revisit field history. Decide where disease risk is real. Protect the acres that still have clear yield to defend. Then avoid turning fungicide timing into a routine trip in fields that don't show enough evidence to support it.

References

- Before applying fungicides to corn: Stop! Look! Consider! — ear leaf protection, scouting before tassel, 14 to 21 day activity, corn-on-corn risk, and economics of fungicide use — Iowa State University Extension — crops.extension.iastate.edu
- Fungicide resistance management in corn, soybean, and wheat in Wisconsin — FRAC groups, resistance risk, scouting-based field history, alternating modes of action, and avoiding curative or reduced-rate use — University of Wisconsin Extension — corn.agronomy.wisc.edu
- Before applying fungicides to corn: Stop! Look! Consider! — hybrid susceptibility, disease position in the canopy, and why timing matters more than simply being early — Iowa State University Extension — crops.extension.iastate.edu