

Harvest and Use Considerations for Immature Soybeans

The recent frost has killed several acres of soybeans before maturity. Some fields may have been harvested for silage or soybean hay and some fields are still left to be dealt with.

Many fields have a high percentage of green colored soybeans that need to dry down. Some soybeans seeds will stay green all the way through the seed, some will only have a green seed coat, and some will turn yellow.

Following are some facts to keep in mind when dealing with the green soybeans. The green colored soybeans may get large discounts when sold to processors, but they can be used effectively in livestock rations.

Let the beans dry in the field as much as possible. This will help reduce the amount of green colored soybeans. When harvesting, pay attention to combine adjustments and don't forget reel speed and sickle condition. A clean cut from a sharp sickle can help reduce shattering.

From a marketing standpoint the following things need to be considered. Soybeans of other colors are very undesirable to most processors who crush the soybeans for oil. Green soybeans produce off-color oil. The processes used to remove the color are both expensive and time-consuming. Buyers can blend only a small volume of green soybeans with ordinary soybeans. Green soybeans are just not well accepted, especially in the current market and have been receiving the designation "sample grade" accompanied by large discounts. One option to look at is separating smaller beans, which may comprise the majority of green seeds may reduce discounts and improve storability for the remaining seeds.

Be careful with blending. Don't compromise a bin of good soybeans by blending a few of the green soybeans into the batch.

The increased presence of chlorophyll in green soybeans also may cause oxidation of the oil and reduce storage life. Surface color will probably change little unless the soybeans are aerated. Although storage problems tend to be a little greater with green, poorly developed soybeans, holding the soybeans for a while may reduce the large discounts that are more likely right at harvest. The good news is that green soybeans should store OK as long as they are dry.

Poorly developed soybeans should be stored in a controlled environment. A bin with aeration is highly recommended. Moisture contents below 11% are recommended for damaged soybeans that are stored under aeration for up to one year. It is not recommended to store grain for long periods without at least some form of aeration. If the seed coats of the soybeans in question have been compromised or if other foreign material (especially pieces of green stems, etc.) is present, storage time could be cut in half.

Contact the Extension Office at 485-8600 if you have questions about harvesting immature soybeans.

