

Evaluation of Organic Barley Varieties and Organic No-Till Soybean Demonstration, Southeast Research Farm, 2017

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Materials and Methods

According to the USDA National Organic Program, certified organic farmers must source organic seed (seed from organically raised crops). The organic seed industry is currently growing in Iowa and the Midwest, and with this growth, organic growers are looking for University-based recommendations on organic varieties to use in Iowa. The Organic Agriculture Program at Iowa State University has been using organic seed at the Southeast Research Farm for seventeen years with excellent results.

Barley

All certified organic acres received an application of 3 tons/acre of ag lime on March 10, 2017, to maintain a proper pH in the study site. There were four varieties selected for the 2017 organic barley variety trial. These included the following Albert Lea Seed House (Albert Lea, MN) barley varieties: Conlon, Pinnacle, Quest, and Robust.

Plots measuring 20 x 380 ft. were laid out in a randomized complete block design with four replications of each variety. Barley was planted at 96.5 lb/acre at a depth of 1 in. on April 21. Red clover was planted as an underseeding to improve soil health at 12 lb/acre. Barley emergence was recorded on May 1. Three varieties (Pinnacle, Quest and Robust) were sampled for nutrient analysis on July 14 by cutting forage at the soil line in three randomly selected square foot areas

within each plot and drying before sending to the Plant and Soils Lab (Agronomy Dept., Ames, IA). Barley was harvested on July 26. Barley grain (200-g sample from random harvest samples) was analyzed for nutrient content by Medallion Labs (Minneapolis, MN).

Rolled rye prior to organic soybean demonstration plot

Rye was drilled at 3 bu/acre on October 18, 2016, in an organic site previously in organic soybeans in 2016. Rye was sampled for biomass amounts before crimping on June 7 by cutting at the soil line in three randomly selected square foot areas of the demonstration plot. Rye was rolled immediately prior to soybean planting on June 8 and again on June 10 before soybean emergence with a Dawn ZRX™ (Sycamore, IL) cover crop roller. Soybeans (IA3051RA12: ISU, Ames, IA) were planted at a 1.5–inch depth at 200,000 seeds/acre. There was no cultivation for weed management, as the rye mulch layer was meant to suppress weed populations. Plant and weed populations were counted on June 22 in 10 randomly selected areas (17.4-ft of row) across the demonstration plot. Following weed counts, one area of the demonstration plot was walked for weeds above the canopy, to determine yield differences with the non-weeded area. Pest and beneficial insects were collected on August 11 by sweeping 20 times with a 15-inch sweep net across three randomly selected soybean rows in each area. The soybean plot was harvested on October 27 with a combine equipped with a weighing scale.

Results and Discussion

Barley

Despite the challenging weather in 2017, organic barley emergence and performance was very good in southeast Iowa. Barley forage averaged 42% carbon and 1.2% protein (Table 1). Barley yields were good, considering the wet weather, and averaged 32 bu/acre across all varieties (Table 2). The Quest variety yield was numerically higher, at 42 bu/acre, but not significantly higher than Robust (34 bu/acre) or Pinnacle (31 bu/acre). Pinnacle was equivalent with Conlon, which was the lowest yielding variety, at 21 bu/acre. These results mirrored previous organic barley production results at this site in 2014, when Conlon was significantly lower yielding, at 36 bu/acre, than the other three varieties, which averaged 48 bu/acre. Grain quality was also good considering the poor weather, with protein levels averaging 10.5% compared to 9.5% in 2014 (Table 3). Total fat content averaged 1.2% across all varieties. Specific fatty acids differed only in palmitic acid, where Conlon, Robust and Quest had the highest levels, at 22.7%, with Pinnacle the lowest, at 22.1% (Table 3). Oleic acid averaged 14% across all varieties, with Quest numerically lower, at 13.5%, compared to 14.1% in the other three varieties. Linoleic acid, an essential fatty acid, averaged 56% across all varieties.

Soybean following rolled rye

Rye biomass averaged 9.8 tons/acre (Table 4), which led to an excellent mulch for crushing. Soybean plant populations in the rolled rye averaged 86,200 plants/acre (Table 5) compared to the 90,167 plants/acre in 2016. Plant populations ranged from 36,000 to 140,000 plants/acre, demonstrating uneven emergence through the rye mulch. Because of the large gaps between the crop row and the mulch layer, weed populations flourished, and emerged in the gaps: broadleaf weeds averaged 12 weeds/m² (Table 5), while grass weeds

were over one hundred per square meter. These results contrast with the excellent weed management in tilled organic soybeans in 2016, where weeds averaged 3 grass and broadleaf weed/m² with two rotary hoeings and two row cultivations after planting. Pest insects, such as bean leaf beetles (BLB), stinkbugs and thrips, were in low numbers, and generally more numerous in the non-weeded section of the plot (Table 7). Only grasshoppers, however, were significantly greater in the non-weeded compared to the weeded area. There were no aphids collected from these aphid-resistant soybeans. Beneficial insects, including spiders, nabids and green lacewings, were also generally more numerous in the weedy section, but there were no statistical differences in beneficial insects between weeded and non-weeded areas.

Where the drilled soybeans in rolled rye were weeded, yields were 21 bu/acre, while non-weeded plots averaged 17.5 bu/acre. Organic soybean yields were much lower than 2016 results from tilled organic plots, which averaged 52 bu/acre. The IA2014RA12 variety that year did yield lower (48 bu/acre) than than the other aphid-resistant variety, Viking 0.2399AT12N, which had the highest numerical yield, at 56 bu/acre. Previous organic no-till soybean yields ranged from 30 to 45 bu/acre with the roller/crimper from Rodale Institute. Even with lower yields, the 21-bu/acre yield would have brought premium organic soybean prices of \$388.50/acre compared to \$385.60 if conventional prices were received for a 40-bu/acre yield. Several possibilities are associated with the reduced emergence and weed gaps between the crop row and the rye mulch layer: 1) the planter and roller/crimper need to be one unit, as opposed to a separate rolling and planting operation, as conducted in 2017; and 2) the ZRX roller was designed for conventional systems (with herbicides) and additional adjustments and attachments (closing wheels, row cleaners)

must be tested in organic systems to facilitate a narrowing of the planting row and pulling the crushed rye mulch over the row after planting.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture for their support of this project. Thanks also go to Chad Hesseltine, Cody Schneider, Josh Nazareth and Bob Turnbull for their help in production, data collection and analytical aspects of this project. We thank Dawn Equipment, Inc. (Sycamore, IL) for their help with the ZRX roller. We also thank Albert Lea Seed and Paul Mugge for their seed support.

Table 1. Barley forage nutrient analysis in the Barley Variety Trial, Southeast Research Farm, Crawfordsville, IA, 7/14/17.

Variety	Total C (%)	Total N (%)
Pinnacle	42.0	1.2949
Quest	42.4	1.1219
Robust	41.8	1.1804
Average	42.07	1.20

Table 2. Barley yield in the Barley Variety Trial, Southeast Research Farm, Crawfordsville, IA, 7/26/17.

Variety	Yield (bu/acre)
Conlon	21.03b ^x
Pinnacle	31.24ab
Quest	42.07a
Robust	33.80a
LSD	12.601
p-value	0.0246

^xMeans followed by the same letter down the column are not significantly different at $P \leq 0.05$ or not significant (NS) (Fisher's Protected LSD Test).

Table 3. Barley grain analysis in the Barley Variety Trial, Southeast Research Farm, Crawfordsville, IA, 2017.

Variety	Protein (%)	Total fat (%)	Saturated fat (%)	Monounsaturated fat (%)	18:2 linoleic (%)	16:0 palmitic (%)	18:1 oleic (%)
Conlon	10.80	2.05	0.50	0.29	55.80	22.91a	14.16
Pinnacle	10.14	2.04	0.49	0.30	55.70	22.13b	14.16
Quest	10.35	2.01	0.49	0.28	55.55	22.48ab	13.52
Robust	10.70	1.88	0.47	0.27	55.29	22.76a	14.05
LSD	NS ^x	NS	NS	NS	NS	0.51436	NS
p-value	0.2262	0.6940	0.8411	0.6096	0.1323	0.0475	0.0686

^xMeans followed by the same letter down the column are not significantly different at $P \leq 0.05$ or not significant (NS) (Fisher's Protected LSD Test).

Table 4. Rye biomass before rolling in the Organic No-Till Soybean Demonstration, Southeast Research Farm, Crawfordsville, IA, 6/7/17.

Rye biomass (tons/acre)	Total C (%)	Total N (%)
12.63	44.0	0.6257
7.20	43.6	0.5562
9.70	44.2	0.6830
Avg: 9.84	43.93	0.6216

Table 5. Soybean stand and weed populations in the Organic No-Till Soybean Demonstration, Southeast Research Farm, Crawfordsville, IA, 8/22/17.

Sample	Plants/acre	Broadleaf weeds/m ²	Grass weeds/m ²
1	86,000	2	300
2	90,000	40	90
3	94,000	8	122
4	74,000	8	68
5	140,000	12	208
6	92,000	6	178
7	120,000	0	136
8	82,000	14	148
9	36,000	20	184
10	48,000	8	230
Average	86,200	11.8	166.4

Table 6. Pest and beneficial insect populations in the Organic No-Till Soybean Demonstration, Southeast Research Farm, Crawfordsville, IA, 8/11/17 (number per 20 sweeps).

Area	Aphids	BLB	Thrips	Corn rootworms	Caterpillars	Whiteflies	Grasshoppers	Leafhoppers	Flea beetles
Unweeded	0	0.60	11.80	1.20	0.00	2.60	2.60	1.20	3.80
Weeded	0	0.60	3.40	1.20	0.20	0.60	0.20	0.20	2.60
LSD	--	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	1.9293	NS	NS
p-value	--	1.00	0.1220	1.00	0.3466	0.1869	0.0209	0.2256	0.7380

Area	Tarnished plant bugs	Moths	Stinkbugs	Mites	Colaspis beetle
Unweeded	0.20	0.20	0.40	1.20	0.20
Weeded	0.00	0.00	0.60	3.40	0.20
LSD	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
p-value	0.3466	0.3466	0.7328	0.4098	1.00

Area	Honey bees	Minute pirate bugs	Spiders	Nabids	Green lacewings	Parasitoid wasps	Ants	Other flies
Unweeded	0.20	0.00	0.60	0.60	0.20	0.20	0.20	4.00
Weeded	0.20	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.20	8.40
LSD	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
p-value	1.00	0.1411	0.1720	0.3466	0.3466	0.3466	1.00	0.3345

*Means followed by the same letter down the column are not significantly different at $P \leq 0.05$ or not significant (NS) (Fisher's Protected LSD Test).