Thank you very much for agreeing to review a manuscript. The reviewer’s job is to help the author(s) improve the scientific quality of their manuscript.

Guiding Principles in the Decision Process

An acceptable manuscript will meet the following general criteria:

- It advances the science by presenting either new knowledge in an area or information toward a better understanding of existing processes and concepts.
- Sound methodology was used and is explained with sufficient detail (and can be replicated).
- Conclusions are supported by data.

The reviewer’s job is not to find reasons to reject a manuscript but to help the author improve the manuscript so that the author, journal, and reader all benefit.

Ask questions: “Is the science good?” and “Is it understandable?” or “What is needed to make it clear?” Look past formatting or style unless it presents confusion.

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Excuse yourself from reviewing a manuscript if a conflict of interest exists. A “yes” to one or more of the following questions (adapted from the USDA–ARS) poses a possible conflict.

- Are the authors and you co-investigators on a current research project?
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In summary, ask yourself if there is a possibility or appearance of a conflict of interest by you reviewing this manuscript; if so, you should decline an invitation to review.

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A reader should be able to readily determine the value of the article and whether or not to read it completely based on the abstract. It also should provide the literature searcher with enough information to assess its value and to index it for later retrieval. The abstract consists of one to two sentences each for the (i) justification or rationale for conducting the work, (ii) objective, (iii) significant results (present quantitative results), (iv) discussion of results, and (v) conclusion. The writing should be concise and clear, identifying scientific names of plants, other organisms, and chemicals; figures, tables, or references should not be cited.

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- Does the title of the paper clearly reflect its contents, and does it use impactful words to capture the reader’s attention? Note: Most journals suggest the title should be 12 words or less.
- Is the content useful or does it advance the science? Is there a segment of the journal’s readership that would find it useful?
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The following should be given at first mention: Latin names for plants, insects, or pathogens; soil nomenclature; chemical names of pesticides.

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• Does the experiment have true replication of treatment combinations?
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• Does the experimental design include enough details so that the results can be judged for validity and so that previous experiments may serve as a basis for the design of future experiments?
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Are all the tables and figures necessary? If so, are they understandable? If not, could you suggest another format? Are the tables and figures self-explanatory?

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A one- or two-sentence description of the supplemental material should be included in the main manuscript directly preceding the reference list. All supplemental material should be reviewed. The same standards of format and quality apply to supplemental tables and figures.

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• Publications Handbook and Style Manual and individual journal instructions to authors: https://www.agronomy.org/publications/journals/author-resources/style-manual

Update January 2018