Planning options

for managing herbicide resistance

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The March–April Crops & Soils magazine feature, “Choosing the Path of Least [Herbicide] Resistance,” emphasized that successful management of herbicide-resistant weeds requires an integrated, multi-strategy approach. A variety of tactics are available, including rotating herbicide modes of action, cover crops, tillage, crop rotation, and cleaning equipment when moving from infested to clean fields.

Careful planning is required to make sure the suite of approaches is tailored to the site. Which weeds are present and where? Which scouting techniques will generate the most useful information? Which suppression tactics are effective for each weed? Which approaches are the best fit for the farmer and the time and equipment available? What natural resources are present and need to be considered to minimize impacts?

Collecting all of the appropriate information and assembling a cost-effective plan can be a time-consuming task for any consultant, especially when working with a new client. A USDA-NRCS program provides a new option that is making a difference in Arkansas.

Conservation Activity Plans

“When resistant pigweed first came out a few years back, old mindsets made it difficult to control,” reports Arkansas NRCS agronomist John Lee. “We were being reactive in a lot of cases and not proactive. In 2012 when I drove across the state, control looked a lot better.” To help make that improvement, Lee reports that NRCS relied on assistance from more than 35 crop advisers who become qualified as NRCS Technical Service Providers (TSPs).

Each TSP worked with farmer clients enrolled in NRCS’s Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to develop integrated Pest Management (IPM) Herbicide Resistance Weed Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs). These plans comprehensively address resistant-weed management on each farm, and identify and protect natural resources, to successfully solve weed control failures. Each plan includes weed management practices, conservation practices, and guidelines for implementation. NRCS provides financial assistance to help cover the costs of plan development for enrolled farmers.

In fiscal year 2012, Arkansas NRCS awarded 138 Herbicide Resistance Weed CAP contracts to farmers, totaling $182,868 in financial assistance covering more than 100,000 acres. Once a CAP is complete, farmers can apply for additional assistance through EQIP to implement conservation and weed management practices identified in the plan.