

SCN Coalition Wins Best of Show NAMA Award in Public Relations

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[The SCN Coalition](#) has received national honors, winning the Best of Show National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA) Award in Public Relations for its media relations campaign to increase the number of growers who are actively managing the soybean cyst nematode (SCN). Since its launch in 2018, the Coalition's media outreach efforts have generated 19.1 million potential impressions among North America's soybean growers and agronomists.

Iowa State University's, Greg Tylka, director of the Iowa Soybean Research Center and a professor of plant pathology and microbiology, was the founder and leader of the original SCN Coalition in the late 1990s and is co-leader of the current effort. Today, the SCN Coalition includes [university scientists](#) in 28 states and Ontario, grower checkoff organizations such as the [North Central Soybean Research Program](#) (NCSRP), [United Soybean Board](#) (USB) and state soybean promotion boards, as well as partners in the private sector, including BASF, Bayer, Growmark, Nufarm, Pioneer (Corteva), Syngenta, Valent and Winfield United.



Tylka says people became complacent about SCN in the 1990s and 2000s because of the success of PI 88788 resistance, which provided good yield protection against SCN for decades. Despite published evidence that SCN populations were developing increased reproduction or virulence on soybean varieties with PI 88788 resistance, almost all SCN-resistant soybean varieties available for farmers to grow since the early 1990s contained SCN resistance from PI 88788. “Now we’re seeing SCN populations throughout the U.S. with high levels of reproduction and damage on resistant soybean varieties with PI 88788 and we have a deeper appreciation of the importance of protecting that resistance technology,” he says. “With The SCN Coalition’s public relations campaign, I’m hopeful growers will recognize the need to sharpen their SCN management strategy and take action to begin to recover yield lost to SCN. And, through checkoff-funded research, it’s possible that an arsenal of new weapons could be available in the future for growers to incorporate into their SCN management programs.”

“SCN is too big of an issue for any one organization to tackle,” says Samuel Markell, professor and plant pathologist at North Dakota State University and current leader of The SCN Coalition. “Our initial research showed a low percentage of soybean growers realize how much of a threat SCN still is to yields. The SCN Coalition brings the soybean industry together to disseminate information and tools for better pest management.”

Engaging print, digital and broadcast media has been integral to the Coalition’s success. As SCN is the No. 1 yield-grabbing pest of soybeans in the U.S. and Canada, the Coalition focuses on delivering timely, science-based information to soybean growers and agronomists about managing SCN, as well as updates on checkoff-funded research projects that bring more tools in the fight against this pest.

Becoming one voice wasn’t a simple process, Markell acknowledges. “With help from MorganMyers, the Coalition’s strategic communication firm, we have been successful in pooling our resources and leveraging each organization’s strengths,” he says. “We have been successful in reaching soybean growers and their supporting agronomists multiple times and in multiple ways. We stay true to our

mission of encouraging soybean growers to increase active SCN management in order to improve profitability, while providing them with the latest information about scientific discoveries.”

Kaitlyn Bissonnette, assistant professor and plant pathologist at the University of Missouri, says the Coalition’s media relations strategy helps tell the SCN story to soybean growers in her state, where more generations of the pest can reproduce compared to northern soybean-growing states. “This is a longevity issue. We’re not just managing SCN now; we’re encouraging soybean growers to manage it for the long run,” she says. “I like to talk to growers about how SCN fits into their management strategies. It starts with splitting off their fall soil fertility test for an SCN egg count.”

The SCN Coalition wants soybean growers to know SCN is manageable. “As SCN spreads to new areas and becomes more damaging in established areas, it’s important that soybean growers are well equipped for the fight,” Markell says. “We have a pathogen that’s changing and adapting, but we also have a team that’s dedicated to providing growers with the best management tools and information as possible. We will mitigate this pest if we adapt as fast as the nematode, and The SCN Coalition is helping us get there.”