

Meadowlark District Extension Agent David Hallauer checks the progress of a soybean field near Oskaloosa.



Where He Needs to Be

District Helps Ag Agent Provide More Attention to Area's Farmers

OSKALOOSA, Kan. – On a steamy day in late May, David Hallauer found himself standing in a dusty, rain-starved soybean field.

It was right where he needed to be.

Hallauer, an agriculture agent in the Meadowlark District that serves Jackson, Jefferson and Nemaha counties, was checking on the progress of plots that K-State Research and Extension has set up to help local farmers evaluate options for a more profitable corn-soybean cropping system.

In previous years, Hallauer may have been at Discovery Days in Manhattan, partly fulfilling his responsibility to also support one county's 4-H program. Instead, he spends his time as a district crop production specialist traveling to and working with farmers in three counties.

"You know, a lot of times in the summer, if you are not in a district, your summer can be tied up with a lot of traveling, taking kids to 4-H events, or getting things ready for the county fair," Hallauer said, noting those are all good things. But, "the district has allowed me to specialize...when that crop is growing, I can be out in the field; I can be laying out plots. I don't have to worry about scheduling things around (travel) because I'm going to be around that crop, around that field for most of the summer."

The District's new emphasis on a soybean-corn cropping system came about because local farmers asked for it: they participated on extension program planning teams that helped make decisions on how Hallauer would spend his time.

Increasing soybean production in the Meadowlark District requires on-farm research and someone who can spend more time working directly with farmers as they balance management decisions.

"If we can do multiple strip type trials, then we can (combine data with university research) and get some sort of idea as to trends over time," Hallauer said. "We've had population studies on one site for 8, 9, 10 years now, and once you get that many years of data, you start to see trends show up."

Farmers in the Meadowlark District grow soybeans on about 200,000 acres. It's a primary rotation crop with corn for many farmers, but not always their primary production emphasis. Now, they can get additional plot research on fungicides, insecticides, soil fertility and more that Hallauer provides for free.