



## MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE

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### **Mississippi Samples Test Positive for Soybean Disease**

Four of five samples taken during an inspection tour in Louisiana and Mississippi on Thursday, Nov. 11, were confirmed today by officials at the U.S. Department of Agriculture as Asian soybean rust, a potentially devastating disease.

Based on predictive weather models and spore dispersal patterns, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and Agricultural Research Service scientists believe the introduction of the fungus here in the United States was caused by a wind-blown event related to the unusual hurricane season.

“Right now, there is no need to panic. We will monitor the region for the presence of this disease, so we will be prepared for next year,” said Mississippi Agriculture Commissioner Lester Spell. “Exposure to soybean rust was inevitable for U.S. soybean producers. The United States was the last remaining major soybean producing country without soybean rust, and now what has been anticipated is here. We will react by working with farmers, USDA officials, and other states by containing the effect of this disease on the soybean crop if there is a spread of the disease.”

The disease has been in South America, which is a major soybean-producing area, since 2001.

“The sample locations indicate a path that matches the wind patterns of Hurricane Ivan,” said Dr. Clayton Hollier, LSU AgCenter extension plant pathologist.

All evidence of the disease was found on soybean plants. The teams, which included scientists from USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Agricultural Research Service (ARS), were also to look at kudzu, an invasive plant prevalent in Mississippi and Louisiana that can serve as a “host” for the fungus that causes the disease.

Asian soybean rust is a fungal disease that interferes with photosynthesis. The plant cannot grow, so yields can be severely restricted.

The disease was found on Nov. 6 by Dr. Ray Schneider, plant pathologist, during a tour of a production field at the LSU AgCenter’s research farm near Baton Rouge. The disease was confirmed as Asian soybean rust on Nov. 10 by the USDA laboratory in Beltsville, Md. Five suspect samples were then pulled from a 100-mile radius from the original finding.

“The coordinated effort between Louisiana, USDA, and MS Department of Agriculture was very efficient and effective,” said Mike Tagert, Mississippi Bureau of Plant Industry Director. “At least we have time to help the growers of the state prepare and adjust for next year. With harvest being so near to an end, we have several months to prepare for the next growing season. Soybean rust has reduced yields as much as 80% in Brazil, so intense monitoring and control is important.”

The other locations, starting at the southernmost parish, were Iberia, St. John, and St. Mary, where it was found in two different fields.

Mississippi Department of Agriculture officials are trying to find more evidence in the state, while teams in Florida and Louisiana are searching for additional evidence.

“Results show that the disease exists in Mississippi today, but there is still much uncertainty right now,” said Dr. Will McCarty, MSU Extension Assistant Director. “The events in the last week have heightened our sensitivity and awareness on soybean rust in the United States. We will continue to check fields and other hosts for the presence of rust in Mississippi, and the MSU Extension Service will educate growers on possible strategies in the event of occurrence on the 2005 crop.”