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The holy grail of U.S. soybean value

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Since the widespread acceptance of glyphosate resistant soybeans, and the breeding of soybean germplasm for agronomic input traits, new oil traits and field yield, there has been steady decline in the protein levels and processing yields. In the past 30 years, the soybean value chain has correctly pushed for higher bushel yield, better oil qualities and more sustainable production.

Soybean meal consistently gives 65% to 70% of the gross processing margin of soybeans to processors. And, about 97% of all soybeans grown in the U.S. are processed into soybean meal either domestically or after export as whole soybeans.

Additionally, over 98% of the soybean meal produced is formulated by nutritionists based on the intrinsic value of protein / amino acids, energy and mineral composition. Soybean meal is the "Gold Standard" of feed ingredients and is the base ingredient most others are priced from due to the high amount of digestible, available essential amino acids. But, with average soybean protein dropping by 1.25% over the past 30 years, and a steady trend line indicating future continuance, doing nothing to improve protein levels is not an option for U.S. soybean farmers, and the entire soybean value chain. Additionally, soybean test weights have dropped significantly along the same time-frame as protein has diminished. This loss of density hinders processing yields, logistics, operating efficiencies and especially, feed ingredient space in animal diets.

Improving the protein / amino acid levels of domestic soybeans is receiving significant funding support from the Soybean Checkoff. The United Soybean Board is committed to making better quality soybeans through constituent pricing, better farmer seed choice, better breeding, better processing techniques and helping nutritionists realize the true intrinsic value.