

Introduction

James A. Webster

Plant Science and Water Conservation Research Laboratory, USDA-ARS, 1301
N. Western Street, Stillwater, OK 74075

Billy R. Wiseman

Insect Biology and Population Management Research Laboratory, USDA-ARS,
P. O. Box 748, Tifton, GA 31793-0748

One of the most ideal pest management strategies for field crops is the use of varieties that are resistant to insects. In using the term *resistant*, we use the classical definition of R. H. Painter as “the ability of a certain variety to produce a larger crop of good quality than do ordinary varieties at the same level of insect population.” There are many benefits of using insect-resistant varieties. The most obvious is the savings to the grower by not applying pesticides, or in reducing the amount of pesticides applied. In addition to the economic benefits accrued by reduced pesticide usage, environmental and social benefits transcend to all citizens of the world. As plant resistance researchers, we are aware of these benefits, but in recent years we have not done a very good job of informing the public about the value of insect-resistant field crop varieties. Part of the problem has been that new data on losses in crop yields caused by insects, as well as data on the hectareage of insect-resistant field crops planted, are difficult to obtain. In addition, field tests comparing insect-resistant crops with insect-susceptible crops under the same level of insect infestation are expensive to conduct.

As the title indicates, the intention of this symposium was to discuss the social as well as the economic and environmental benefits of plant resistance in field crops. We have probably fallen short in the area of social benefits. We know that social benefits from the use of resistant varieties are real, but documenting these benefits is difficult. There is a need for cooperative research with plant resistance researchers and researchers in the social sciences.