



Photo credit: Robert W. Freckmann
Herbarium UW-Stevens Point

Soybeans are legumes, in other words, they fix atmospheric nitrogen and provide nitrogen to the soil for crops that follow in subsequent years, thereby reducing the need for fertilizer. Aside from being an excellent source of high-quality food oil, soybeans are useful in a variety of food products such as tofu, yogurt, and cream cheese, and in industrial products including oils, soap, cosmetics, resins, plastics, inks, crayons, solvents, and biodiesel fuel.

Soybeans (*Glycine max*)

Soybeans are an annual crop native to southeast Asia and China where they have been an important crop for about 5,000 years. Soybeans are relatively new to the Americas; the first commercial crop of soybeans in the U.S. was planted in 1929. Nonetheless, soybeans are now planted on about 70 million acres and the U.S. provides about 55 percent of the world's production. Soy oil provides 80% of the edible oil consumed by humans in the U.S., but most soybeans are either exported or fed to livestock as a protein source.

Narrative credit: James Coors, Professor UW-Madison

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