

P.L. Rohrer Cooperates With Corn Trials

SMOKETOWN (Lancaster Co.) — Selection of a plant variety to use on the farm can not be done through a popularity contest.

And so it is that varieties are tested and developed for specific markets and needs.

Corn variety development and the research and trials performed to analyze performance are done in such a manner so that, with the help of knowledgeable seed salesmen, the farmer who knows his farm can select a variety that works with his program.

Soil types, weather extremes, uses for the corn plant, operational "windows" for planting, harvest and storage, etc., all make for individual selection of varieties.

It also benefits farmers when local seed distributors participate

in trials. This way localized data can be used to compare and develop varieties.

Last week, at P.L. Rohrer Seeds, owned by P.L. Rohrer & Bros. Inc., in Smoketown, a two-man crew from Pau Seeds Inc., of Ames, Iowa, arrived to harvest test plots of hybrid varieties in development.

The relationship between seed retailer, seed dealer and plant breeder is strong, but independent.

Rohrer Bros. is a local dealer of AgriPro Seeds. Wayne B. Knerr is district sales manager for AgriPro, and Pau Seeds Inc. is a plant breeding operation.

Over the years, while company and business relationships have changed, the success of the development and availability of



Phil Bartlett, assistant breeder for Pau Seeds Inc., drives an old, customized two-row combine with specialized compartments for weighing and testing corn moisture. The combine is used by the company to harvest a Lancaster County test plot strip and derive yield and performance data.

improved varieties of corn still relies mostly on cooperation between the people doing the actual field work.

Years ago, the commercial plant variety developer was generally also the selector of beneficial characteristics and also the seed dealer.

But that type of business arrangement doesn't necessarily guarantee that a company would be in line with farmer needs, nor does it ensure that the farmer got the best varieties.

If one business managed risk and cash flow the same for each aspect of developing and retailing plant varieties, there could be a tendency for decisions to be made without a complete understanding of what was best for that specific aspect of operation.

In other words, the financial risk and overhead that is tied up in plant development limits the ability of a single company to recoup losses — if that company wants to be the sole retailer of all genetic

lines.

Instead, the whole business today is separated and managed to maximize the efficiencies and efforts of each different aspects of plant variety development.

Pau Seeds independently develops varieties and markets them openly, although AgriPro gets right of first refusal and Rohrer gets to sell only what best suits the needs of its clientele.

Pau Seeds Inc. is a subsidiary of
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Wayne B. Knerr, district sales manager for AgriPro Seeds, of Eimer, N.J., pulls back the husk from some trial hybrid corn to give it a visual check, though the real analysis comes from yield and moisture calculations and stalk strength tests.

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