

The Impact of Biotech Crops

advanced biotechnology techniques are as safe and wholesome as all of the other products it reviews.

Some proponents argue that agricultural biotechnology products destroy the environment. However, the fact is most of the biotech crops actually enhance environmental sustainability. Environmental benefits include: reduction in applications of pesticide, reduction in overall herbicide use, and the promotion of sustainable farming practices including improvements to soil and water quality and decreases in soil erosion.

Consumers that have a concern about agricultural biotechnology feel they might not be benefiting from these new products. Actually, today's biotech crops have proven their ability to reduce, and in some cases eliminate, the use of agricultural chemicals. This approach to food production provides benefits from both reduced chemicals used in the production of food and an economical production advantage to farmers which helps keep food costs down. The future of agricultural biotechnology has the potential of producing even better foods with increased product value. Some of the future

products may include food oils that deliver daily allowances of vitamins, lower levels of fat and provide other nutraceutical values.

Some farmers fear that they may not have a strong market in the fall of 2000 for their grain produced using biotech crops. Here in Lancaster County and surrounding regions, farmers are primarily consuming the biotech crops they grow with livestock on their own farms and are not as dependent on grain prices, as is the mid-west. But, despite the rumors, more than 80% of grain elevators across the Corn Belt plan to accept biotech crops this fall according to the Farm Progress Companies. The majority of the elevators surveyed are not planning on even asking if the grain they receive involves biotechnology.

An important thing for concerned farmers is to watch how the marketplace reacts to biotech crops in the future. There may be heightened concern from the public in the short term until the proper education of agricultural biotechnology is explained and trusted by the consumer. But, in the long run biotech crops will have a tremendous amount to offer. Just as we have already embraced the science of biotechnology in the pharmaceutical industry, biotechnology will provide increased nutraceutical and environmental benefits to agriculture.

Feel free to send your comments or questions by email to Brent Landis at The Lancaster Chamber at blandis@lcci.com or call him at 717-397-3531, ext. 62.

Agriculture Insights

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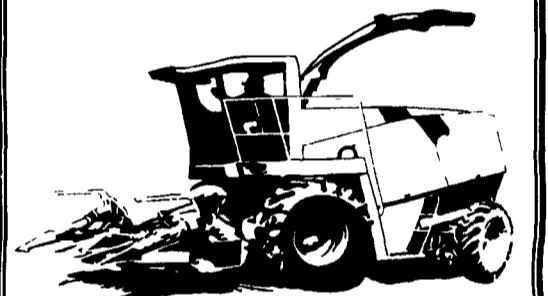
One of the biggest advancements that agriculture is currently learning to adopt and manage is the use of biotechnology in our crops. Biotech crops can offer an economic advantage to farmers with reduced pesticides, higher yields and greater flexibility. Approximately 80% of soybeans and 30% of corn acres planted in 1999 in Lancaster County included biotech seeds. Early projections for the 2000 planting season in Lancaster County estimate the same to marginally more acres with the biotech traits in the seeds. According to Ag Education and Consulting (AEC), across the United States farmers are projected to slightly decrease their overall biotech acres planted, with corn acres decreasing from 23.5% in 1999 to 17.7% in 2000 and soybean acres

decreasing from 51.3% in 1999 to 48.4% in 2000. The projected decrease, especially in corn, is due to the economics of planting Bt corn in acres of the mid-west where there is little European corn bore pressure.

Although the ethical use of biotech crops may be an issue many will debate for years to come, the three American regulatory agencies that are responsible for the oversight of products using biotechnology, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have each evaluated and approved biotech crops as safe for consumption and the environment. There has been extensive testing to ensure that crops improved by using



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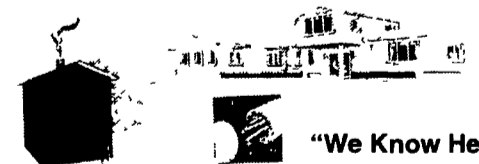
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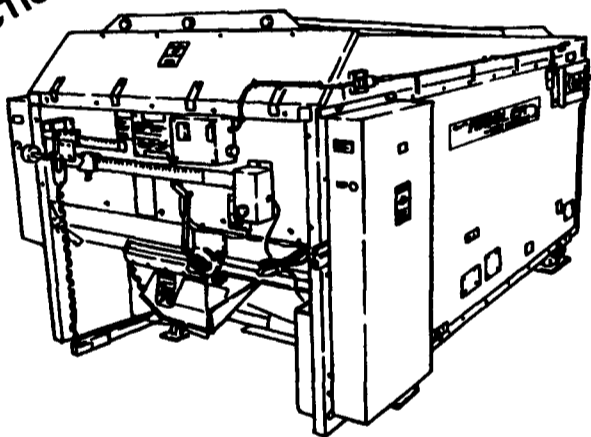
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