



CANTERRA SEEDS, Growing Opportunities Supplemental Q&A with David Hansen

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In the March/April 2010 issue of the adAdvance Journal, David Hansen, President and CEO of CANTERRA SEEDS was interviewed. In the article, comments were made regarding CANTERRA SEEDS that were misleading and inaccurate. CANTERRA SEEDS would like to draw attention to this supplemental Q&A with David Hansen.

David, describe CANTERRA SEEDS.

CANTERRA SEEDS was founded in 1996 by 9 entrepreneurial seed growers from the three Prairie Provinces. They believed there was an opportunity to source a great depth of genetics, as well as to help steer varietal development by forming relationships with end-use customers. Today we have expanded to include more than 200 shareholders, including independent seed growers and retailers. However, our vision hasn't changed – to be a leader in the Canadian seed industry.

CANTERRA SEEDS has active partnerships with public and private breeders and sources genetics from national and international programs. This gives us access to thousands of potential varieties in numerous crop types.

Our research and product development program conducts meticulous in-field agronomic testing and rigorous quality assessment to provide accurate product evaluations.

By bringing together seed grower and producer insights, with strategic end-user relationships we develop a sound awareness of market demand for each variety we commercialize.

Bringing it all together, our extensive variety access, focused research and strong relationships ensure we offer a dynamic product portfolio today, and into the future

Looking forward, what changes do you think we might see in the Canadian seed industry?

There are many changes on the horizon. Multinational life science companies have announced they will be investing in cereal breeding. Where today public breeders play a large role in the development of these crops, we will see private breeders become bigger contributors. As new traits are developed, the way seed is marketed and managed will be reviewed. There will be fewer and larger players and competition will be steep. Partnering well will be very important.

Despite industry changes, seed growers have always been, and will continue to be, an important part of the system.

The regulatory system that governs the seed industry is often described as restrictive. What modifications could be made that would support the progression of the industry?

New varieties will always need to go through agronomic performance and quality evaluations, whether this is done in a government regulated system or privately. The key is that whichever system is used needs to be flexible enough to deal with the unique realities of each crop type and crop segment. The variety registration system in Canada, as regulated by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, has undergone significant modification under the Seed Program Modernization Initiative. There are now different routes to registration depending on the crop type and its needs. The system used for canola has evolved and become very efficient and predictable, while still meeting the needs of all those in the value chain. Changes for other crop types should be expected as the recommending committee for each defines more specifically how variety evaluation and recommendation will be done.

The bottom line is that the system needs to work effectively and efficiently to ensure that improved varieties are appropriately evaluated and get into the hands of Canadian farmers and end-users as quickly as possible.

The Canadian seed industry could look very different in the future than it does today. How will CANTERRA SEEDS ensure you are part of this evolution?

As new technologies and genetics are commercialized, breeders and technology developers will be looking for a Canadian seed company to partner with. A number of factors, including our range of production and distribution models which can be applied, ensure we have the ability to penetrate the market rapidly and effectively, as well as meet the needs of end-users.

CANTERRA SEEDS has spent years building relationships with customers and partners, including plant breeders, trait developers, seed growers, distributors, industry players and end-users. These important relationships will enable us to remain flexible and well positioned for future opportunities.