



Assessing for end user needs

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Farmers want confidence that there is a market for their crop. As such, more focus has turned to finding the crops or varieties that are sought after by end-users. To gain an understanding of how seed companies are trying to deliver, we sat down with CANTERRA SEEDS' Director of Research & Development - Dr. Erin Armstrong.

Q: When acquiring varieties, what do you evaluate them on?

A: Three things - agronomic performance, disease resistance and quality. Without good agronomic performance and a strong disease resistance package, farmers won't want to grow a variety. Without a good quality profile, processors won't want to select that variety.

Q: What quality criteria do you look for when selecting varieties?

A: The quality criteria vary by crop type and by end-user, some are straight forward (canola) and others are very complex (malting barley and milling wheat). In general, quality criteria focus on assessing the following: composition, appearance/structure, the presence of positive factors, the presence of negative factors, performance in specific processes, and consistency. If a variety is not consistent and reliable then it is not one you want to bring to market.

Q: How is quality measured in trial lines?

A: Again, it varies by crop type, especially as it relates to processing performance. At earlier stages of screening, more basic tests will be done, then as a line advances through trials more and more detailed evaluated is conducted. We always need to consider the time, cost and relevance of the tests which are done, to balance the resources available for quality testing with the need to understand a variety's quality profile. The more advanced a line, the more important it is to round out our understanding of how its quality profile will fit the end-use market needs.

Q: In summary, why is the evaluation of quality important to farmers?

A: Screening and selecting varieties for their quality profile provides basic knowledge about the potential of a variety - if the environment cooperates and management practices are appropriate. It is important to remember that altering management of a crop variety will not result in expression of a different quality profile. Choosing a variety which will perform well in a given area based on its agronomic performance and disease package, as well as considering the quality profile which end-users are looking for, will definitely increase the chances of getting high-yielding, high quality grain.

For further information please contact CANTERRA SEEDS at 1-877-439-7333.