



Technology

In Our Lives

Ten Years Later: Biotech Crops Delivering Benefits Consistently

(NAPSA)—The rapid adoption of plant biotechnology, which marks its 10th anniversary in 2005, has been driven by substantial economic, environmental and social benefits to both industrial and developing nations.

In 2004, biotech crops were planted on 200 million acres worldwide, according to a recent study by the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA). That represents a nearly 50-fold increase from just over 4 million acres planted in 1996, the first year biotech crops were commercially available.

For farmers, biotech developments have resulted in improved weed, insect and viral pest control, leading to improved yields, greater planting flexibility and reduced production costs.

The National Center for Food and Agricultural Policy (NCFAP) reported recently that U.S. farmers increased yields by over 5 billion pounds in 2003 due to their use of biotech crops such as soybeans, corn, cotton and canola. Overall, NCFAP reported that farmers benefited by nearly \$2 billion in 2003 due to biotechnology.

From an environmental standpoint, biotech crops have significantly reduced the amount of pesticide application used in agriculture worldwide. According to an NCFAP report, U.S. growers eliminated more than 46 million pounds of pesticide applications due to the use of biotech crops. Biotech soybean production accounts for the greatest reduction, an estimated 20 million pounds eliminated in



Recent estimates suggest that more than 50 percent of U.S. corn acres were planted with biotech varieties in 2005.

2003.

“It’s hard to overstate how important Roundup Ready® technology has been to the soybean industry,” says Ron Heck, chairman of the American Soybean Association. “It has enabled farmers to more effectively control weeds and produce higher-quality soybeans with fewer resources.”

Biotech corn products are also delivering important benefits to U.S. corn producers and the land they farm. A report by Iowa State University states that Monsanto’s YieldGard Rootworm technology is expected to eliminate several inputs, including the use of 1 million plastic containers, 5 million pounds of insecticide active ingredient applications and 5 million gallons of diesel fuel per year.

From a global perspective, the ISAAA study also reports that approximately 8.25 million farm-

ers in 17 countries planted biotech crops in 2004, an 18 percent increase from the previous year. Of the farmers who began using biotech crops in 2004, the study notes that 90 percent were in developing countries. The safe use of plant biotechnology over the past 10 years has resulted in more sustainable agricultural development to help meet the world’s food needs. Agricultural leaders met earlier this year in Chicago to recognize the planting of the one-billionth acre of biotech crops planted throughout the world.

A number of new biotech products are in the regulatory pipeline, and new technologies are now being developed that will undoubtedly offer even greater promise for U.S. farmers and consumers, according to the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA). “The future of biotechnology in agriculture is brighter than ever,” says Darrin Ihnen, chair of NCGA’s Biotechnology Working Group.

The new product pipeline includes yield improvements, stress tolerance, agronomic pest resistance, nutritional enhancements and improved animal feed nutrition.

Growers who have seen the benefits of plant biotechnology first-hand over the past decade look forward to incorporating new technologies in their farming operations. “Biotechnology has definitely helped farmers make more profit per acre by increasing yield per acre,” says Jeff Falk, who farms 3,500 acres in Monroe, Wis.