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HEAD: Intellectual Property – A Shared Responsibility

DECK: Seed retailers play a critical role in protecting seed intellectual property, bringing benefits to farmers.

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It is obvious that seed retailers play a key role in advising farmers on crop inputs and management techniques that can improve their farm operation. What may be less obvious is that by talking with farmers about seed intellectual property protection retailers can also improve their operations and agriculture as a whole. While some farmers are quick to recite a few benefits they receive from farm-saved seed, the returns and benefits they receive by investing in seed protected by intellectual property such as Plant Breeders' Rights or Technology Use Agreements are not always as top of mind, even though they are numerous.

The Canadian Seed Trade Association recognizes that raising awareness about how intellectual property protection fosters innovation is a shared responsibility, and seed retailers play a critical role. This starts with positive messages you can share with your farm customers – from yield benefits, to improved disease and pest resistance, to traits for healthier foods.

Sub-head: Share the Benefits

Effective intellectual property protection means a level playing field with competitors, giving seed companies the confidence to invest in research and develop new varieties that benefit growers. According to a recent survey, Canada's seed companies will invest over \$56 million in R&D in 2007 – 26% of their operating budgets – and plan to almost double that investment by 2012.

The results of this research commitment provide tremendous benefits to growers. During the last 15 years, canola yields have increased 27%, Ontario corn yields have increased 59% and Ontario winter wheat yields have increased 62%. Farmers are realizing agronomic benefits such as drought tolerance, improved nitrogen use efficiency, and improved disease and pest resistance. These new varieties bring great value to farmers and need protecting to ensure that more innovations are possible in the future. One new wheat variety in Western Canada has generated an increase of \$562 million in farm gate receipts since its introduction, and less than 1% of this (\$4.5 million) was captured in the form of royalties.

Not only does intellectual property protection allow for monetary benefits for the farmer, it also generates new products that bring advantages to the entire food supply chain. Seed companies are investing in traits for healthier foods such as reduced trans fat and saturated fat, omega 3 oils, and increased anti-oxidants, and traits for renewable resources such as biofuels and bioplastics.

Crops that utilize intellectual property protection have a high research investment and see many of these innovations, keeping Canadian growers competitive in the global market. For example, corn, soybeans, and canola account for 90% of seed company research investment and result in more variety choices for farmers with higher yields, improved disease and pest resistance, and specialty food use traits.

Sub-head: How you can help

Sharing these messages with farm customers is only part of the solution. It is also important for seed dealers to:

- n) Know your Responsibility – Your dealer sales agreement may assign you several responsibilities such as informing growers about the risks associated with not complying with the law.
- n) Understand the Rules – Be aware of legal and illegal practices for saving, replanting, and selling seed.
- n) Be Familiar with the Tools – There are many different methods of protecting intellectual property that retailers should understand and utilize such as the Canada Seeds Act, Plant Breeders' Rights, and Technology Use Agreements.

Taking a leadership role in speaking candidly and positively about the advantages of intellectual property protection will lend to successful adoption of the practice, foster a healthy competitive environment, and benefit the future of Canadian agriculture.

Look for more details and a fact sheet on intellectual property protection on the CSTA web site at [www.cdnseed.org](http://www.cdnseed.org).