

PLANTING SUCCESS

SEED IS THE FOUNDATION OF ANY GOOD CROP. As you finalize plans for this year's growing season, ensure you're setting yourself up for success by asking the right questions. Did last year's crops perform well? Do you need higher yields, better pest resistance and improved quality? How about access to new markets? Choosing certified seed is the basis for a successful crop as well as an important risk management tool.

Dale Connick chooses certified seed because it leads to success. Connick grows wheat, oats, flax, canola and peas, plus hay for his cow/calf operation near Gull Lake in southwestern Saskatchewan. "We're always looking for new and improved varieties to try," says Connick. "Certified seed gives us access to new traits for improved yield or pest resistance, such as sawfly, which is a big issue in our area. As a result, it increases the success and profits of our farm."

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Connick points to Lillian, the new solid stemmed wheat variety that provides better sawfly control along with good yields. He also points to herbicide tolerant canola that allows minimal tillage and more flexibility in their crop rotations.

By purchasing certified seed, growers give seed companies the confidence to invest in developing improved varieties that are profitable for growers. Canada's seed companies invested over \$56 million in R&D in 2007 and plan to almost double that investment by 2012.

"Supporting R&D through certified seed is very important in securing access to innovative new varieties for the future," says Connick. One innovation on the horizon is the new midge tolerant wheat varieties, due to be commercially available in 2009. This new innovation has the potential to prevent an estimated \$40 million dollars per year in losses from midge damage downgrading and yield reductions.

"Canada needs to maintain its competitive position in the world market and our real advantage is being innovative with our variety development," says Connick. "We can't compete being status quo."

Pat Olszewski is another grower who is realizing benefits from certified seed. Olszewski operates a 4,100 acre farm near the Montana border at Frontier, Saskatchewan where he grows wheat, yellow peas, brown mustard and malting barley. "I choose certified seed for varietal purity, better vigour and disease resistance," says Olszewski. "In a market where every dollar counts, you want to make sure you are starting with the right variety that works best on your farm – and certified seed is the only way to guarantee that."

Olszewski is also using certified seed to access new markets. He has participated in the identity-preserved wheat program for Warburton's bakery for eight years and is now participating in the Navigator durum program, both of which require the use of certified seed every year. In addition to opening up new marketing opportunities, IP programs allow farmers to grow elite genetics, and offer incentives such as contract and storage payments and guaranteed delivery.

"I really like the Navigator variety, especially its harvestability," says Olszewski. "Through these programs, I've been able to secure markets, ship extra tonnage and receive premiums that cover the seed cost many times over."

From varietal purity and improved traits, to accessing new markets and helping develop new varieties for the future – it all starts with certified seed.