

# A look at the future through expert eyes



**For Starters**  
By CHERRY BRIESER STOUT

**T**HE rapid change of pace in agriculture today requires that we look and act differently from the past. For sure, the industry is much more complex than when I started writing for this publication nearly two decades ago.

To help stay current, I attended a technology summit this spring with 14 other Farm Progress editors from around the Midwest. Over a three-day period, we heard scores of experts from Case IH, Cummins, Dow, John Deere, Monsanto, Pioneer, Syngenta and other leading companies.

Over the years, Farm Progress has held 12 of these technology summits, giving editors a face-to-face opportunity to talk with key industry players about the changing marketplace, and to look at current and future industry trends.

It's a chance to reflect together and focus on items of importance facing farmers.

These intensive meetings help us develop a deeper understanding of the

challenges and critical developments that will impact your future.

What changes do industry leaders see now, in the year ahead or 10 years down the road? Here's a glimpse.

**Next wave of traits:** The biotech revolution will continue to produce big changes, including seeds that withstand drought, cold, improved nitrogen utilization and superior herbicide-tolerance genes. You can check out many of these blockbuster products at the Farm Progress Show in Decatur on Aug. 28-30, including the global debut of a new trait from Dow.

**Autoguidance leads the way:** Farmers quickly seized on the benefits of autoguidance, with an estimated one in four now using some kind of system. Autoguidance is popular with older farmers with physical limitations. And the technology makes the worst tractor operator as good as the best.

Farmers who zone or strip till are seeing a real advantage to real-time kinematic systems, or RTK — the most precise form of autoguidance.

Site-specific technology has also encouraged many equipment manufacturers like Case IH to move to open architecture-type arrangements that make it easier to share or mix and match equipment and software.

**Cell phones will do it all:** For many farmers, the trusty cell phone that rides on the hip is an invaluable communications tool that saves time and money, and helps with safety. Cell phones have changed the way you do business, as sophisticated GPS and Web-enabled devices allow you to check the markets and download Doppler radars for current weather forecasts.

With these same features, you may someday be able to walk into a field, and enter a pin number into your phone that can tell what field you're in, when it was planted, how much precipitation it's received and other critical information. That will mean the end of those pocket notebooks to jot down field notes.

**Ag and energy converge:** The federal mandate to use ethanol and other renewable fuels continues to change the landscape as the relationship between bushels of grain and barrels of oil grows. Likewise, it will continue to be a double-edged sword that puts pressure on the livestock and food industry, and even forces the seed industry to re-evaluate the fit for some seeds.

**Life after Roundup:** Glyphosate is considered by many to be the best herbicide ever invented. For years, it has made even poor farmers look good. But all good things must come to an end.

Surveys show that one out of four farmers in the Midwest believe they have glyphosate-resistant weeds.

Industry experts say that farmers are going to have to wean themselves from their high dependency on glyphosates and take some pressure off by adding a residual into the mix and using other herbicides with other modes of action.

**Precision farming goes mainstream:** Some 95% of combines are now coming off the line with yield monitors, making this technology a mainstream part of growing corn and beans. Yet, the challenge for many farmers remains how to get value from that stack of yield maps sitting in the corner of the farm office. That's driving companies to find ways to help farmers get more value from their precision-farming investment.

Consider Pioneer's offer to provide any of its customers a free yield mapping service through local sales representatives. Thousands of customers take advantage of the service on millions of acres across the U.S.

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