

Significant bump in bean yield from new Pioneer technology

By WILLIE VOGT

IT'S not every day that a company makes an announcement of the magnitude Pioneer did in mid-July. The company will be launching its Y series line of soybeans across the country for 2009 and plans to have enough bags of the new, enhanced-yield bean seed available to plant 9 million acres. Offering maturities ranging from Group 0 to Group 7, Pioneer will be covering the entire soybean market in the first-year launch.

"We take our job of increasing productivity very seriously," says Paul Schickler, DuPont vice president and general manager, and president Pioneer Hi-Bred. "In this situation of high demand and low stocks we have the science to deliver step-change improvements for the 2009 growing season."

Field tested boost

The Y series uses the Accelerated Yield Technology the company first started working on a few years ago. The concept, proprietary to Pioneer brands, involves high-level genetic mapping utilized in a new way to track down yield genes. The result is an average 5% bump in yields in the first year across

Key Points

- Pioneer will launch Y series soybeans for 2009.
- Company plans to have 9 million acres of seed available.
- Yield boost is at least 5%, and up to 10% in some areas.

the board, with as much as a 10% increase in some areas.

"We've tested this in 1,800 field comparisons," says John Soper, senior research director.

Bring that 5% average bump to 9 million acres of intended sales, and Pioneer estimates output could climb 19 million bushels from the Y series launch alone.

This launch is being called the largest single-year release in the company's 82-year history. The wide nature of the launch, with seed production already at full speed in 28 locations around the country, is good news for Pioneer customers and for those considering trying out the technology, too.

"As with every year and introduction, there is more demand than product available," says Don Schafer, senior marketing manager. "We're doing everything we can to maximize our yield for all of

the product. There is always an allocation process we'll go through."

How AYT works

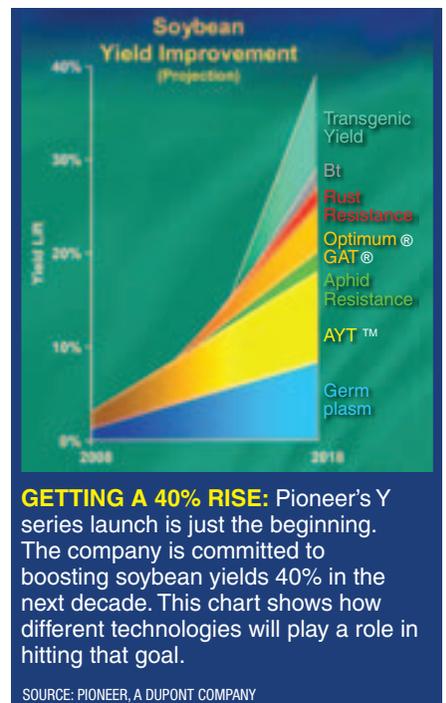
Just what is this AYT approach to boosting yield?

Soper explains that for decades soybean breeders have been aiming for one goal: higher yield. The idea occurred to at least one Pioneer researcher that if all that effort is going toward higher yield, that should be changing the inventory of the 30,000 genes in a modern soybean plant.

Using marker-assisted technology that the company has been putting to work since the mid-1990s, they started asking an interesting question: What genes are more present in today's plants than in the great-great-grandparents of that same plant?

"We have those grandparents on which we can do genetic analysis," Soper says. "And we compared those genes to those in our elite varieties to determine what genes went from a low frequency 50 years ago to a high frequency today. It's a high probability that those genes increased as a result of the yield-focus of those plant breeders."

The company identified 100 genes that it focused on for further testing.



Scientists were able to validate that some did have yield-enhancing properties. And you'll be able to test them out in 2009. Simply look for new soybean varieties that have a Y in their variety name, such as 93Y70.

These new-generation seeds are not transgenic, even though high-level DNA work was done to find the yield-enhancing traits. However, they should offer a consistent income boost over previous-generation lines.

Schafer says the price has not been determined for the Y series, but the company will "continue to bring value to market and value to our customers."

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*Information from University of Minnesota College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences. Lazarus W., July, 2008.

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