

Crop Production

Jury out on planting Vistive beans

By JENNIFER VINCENT

FOUR years ago when Monsanto's Vistive, low-linolenic soybeans were first launched, there was much anticipation about growing consumer demand for the oil that virtually eliminates trans fatty acids.

Last year, growers were lining up to

Key Points

- Vistive bean contracts aren't filling up like last year.
- Some growers report substantial yield drags.
- Growers urged to work with seed dealers to plant right variety for conditions.

put the seed down, which offers a 50-cent-per-bushel harvest delivery premium or a 60-cent-per-bushel premium after January. Then, soybeans' market price went through the roof and interest waned.

Even though soybean prices have since retreated, the interest in the Vistive bean is still down.

"We contacted every grower by mail that raised Vistive beans last year to see what their intentions were," says Dan Bailey, Zeeland Farm Services seed business manager. "Zeeland had made the decision to go forward with the same number of contracted acres in '09 as in '08, which was 43,000 acres."

At press time, Zeeland had about 12,000 contracted acres still unfilled.

However, that market could fill up at any minute, or Zeeland could make the decision to close contracts. "We filled low-fat and Vistive acres last year for the first time, but we don't have a consistent movement of the oil from the end users," Bailey says. "It's a risky business when you're paying premiums on beans and then have to sit on that oil for six months or a year. We're probably going to be conservative [in acres offered]."

Growers are also being cautious, with mixed reviews on the beans' yields compared to regular Roundup Ready beans.

Lack of end-user demand has hindered the market, as cheaper substitutes like palm oil and other blends can also offer the low trans fat promise, but at the cost of increased saturated oil — usually unbeknownst to the consumer.

Mixed yield results

It really depends on who you talk to about Vistive yields versus regular RR beans, Bailey says. "I've heard as little as three-tenths of a bushel yield drags to as much as 5 bushels."

Brian Stuart, a Monsanto dealer from the Portland area, agrees, "There's no middle ground, either growers loved them or hated them."

In Stuart's yield plot, the Vistive beans yielded 43.5 bushels per acre versus normal RR beans at 43.8.

Bailey says last year was difficult for growers with yield expectations that may have soured them on the Vistive beans. "Soybeans looked good, but come harvesttime, it was disappointing. The blame is being put on Vistive when maybe it shouldn't," he says.

Extreme weather conditions and the wrong variety being planted are possible contributors. "When something comes new, growers want that bean. They need to work with their seed supplier to make sure to position the right bean in the right environment," Bailey says.

Gary Balder, a Monsanto dealer in the Hamilton area, says half of his seed sales last year were to Vistive beans. "We had some growers that were not real happy," he says.

"But, in fairness, there were some that weren't happy with regular [Roundup] beans, either. Yields were down across the board. Most people are staying with the Vistive beans. When we were looking at \$13 beans, the 50-cent premium didn't look like a whole lot, but when you have \$6 to \$8 beans, that 50 cents is looking a whole lot better," he adds.

However, John Diehl with DF seeds says his Vistive seed sales are down about 50% because of the uncertainty.

"I don't see the seed [demand] slowing down or losing stride," he says. "The big companies like Cargill and Bunge are reporting increases in Vistive beans and are looking for more acres."

POSITIONS OF SUPPORT FOR BIODIESEL BLENDS

SOURCE: NATIONAL BIODIESEL BOARD

COMPANY	BIODIESEL BLEND APPROVAL
Ford Motor Co. Updated 8/31/07	B5 Any recent-model Ford truck with a diesel engine can run on a mixture including up to 5 percent biodiesel (B5), but higher amounts are not recommended at this time. Ford is currently conducting research that may enable future B20 acceptance.
General Motors Updated 8/1/07	B20 - Available as a Special Equipment Option (SEO) on the 2008 Chevy Silverado, GMC Sierra, Chevy Express, and GMC Savana for approved fleets B5 - All other GM diesel vehicles
International Updated 5/1/08	B5 / B20 International/Navistar unconditionally warrants use of biodiesel blends up to and including B5 blends meeting ASTM D6751 and ASTM D975 specifications. Use of B6-B20 blends is at the discretion of the customer/operator and will not automatically void an engine warranty. Use of a BQ-9000 certified supplier is recommended.
John Deere Updated 11/12/07	John Deere places a B2 factory fill in all its U.S. diesel equipment. While 5 percent blends (B5) are preferred, biodiesel concentrations up to a 20 percent blend (B20) in petroleum diesel fuel can be used in John Deere engines through Tier 3/Stage III A models, including all non-emissions-certified engines. Biodiesel must meet ASTM D6751 and petroleum diesel content must meet ASTM D975. John Deere recommends use of a BQ-9000 certified supplier for the biodiesel.
Kubota Updated 11/1/06	B5 Biodiesel must meet ASTM D6751 and petroleum diesel must meet ASTM D975. Kubota recommends purchasing biodiesel from BQ-9000 suppliers.
Mack Updated 6/28/07	B5 produced from Soy Methyl Ester (SME or SOME) Biodiesel use is approved at B5 in all Mack engines including MP, ASET, and E-Tech. The biodiesel must be supplied by a BQ-9000 Accredited Producer and Certified Marketer.
New Holland Updated 11/8/07	B100 New Holland supports the use of B100 biodiesel in all equipment with New Holland-manufactured diesel engines, including electronic injection engines with common rail technology. A listing of all the New Holland models that can be run on B100 can be found at: http://www.newholland.com/na/biodiesel



For more information on biodiesel and suppliers visit:
www.michigansoybean.org

