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Seed for Thought

Roger Boerma, Executive Director



A question for the ages: Why do so many of us in the agricultural sector continue to fight against mega-trends? If we consider the past several decades it is obvious that intellectual property rights were a driver in the success of many major industries in the United States. For example, industries developing new computer software, music, and yes, even varieties of several agronomic crops have developed schemes to protect their intellectual property. Yet many of us seem unwilling to embrace the concept.

Let's examine several major agricultural breakthroughs. The companies that developed improved corn hybrids were fortunate in that they had a built-in mechanism of intellectual property protection in that when seeds from a hybrid corn variety were harvested and replanted they did not show the superior yield shown by the hybrid parent. This form of biological intellectual property protection required growers to repurchase hybrid seed each year to achieve the benefits of the hybrid variety. This return on investment to the developers was reinvested in research and gave rise to ultra-successful corn hybrid improvement programs in the United States.

U.S. biotechnology and seed companies were able to change the soybean seed industry from one in which most new varieties were pirated within 2 or 3 years of initial release (brown bagging) to an industry that has accepted the need to pay for new technology with the expectation that these fees will be reinvested to produce even better varieties. Yet, it required vigilance and litigation of a few of the "bad players" by several companies to achieve compliance.

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Education

Blake Fleeman, Licensing/Marketing Manger

GSD hosted an educational program for two potential international turf licensees. The two groups were from Japan and China. The programs included a presentation from Terry Hollifield on ITGAP standards for turf, a presentation on GSD's foundation turf production program from Blake Fleeman, and a plot tour and harvesting demonstration by Doug McWhorter. I believe that one if not both groups have decided to request a license for their country. GSD will also be providing a tour and presentation to Dr. Donglin Zhang's HORT3620: Plant Propagation class in March.



Licensing

Blake Fleeman, Licensing/Marketing Manger

The licensing activity has begun to pick up with people starting to think about spring and which new peanut varieties they want to plant this year. We have already had several requests for license agreements for the two new peanut varieties (Georgia-13M and Georgia-14N) and some of the older ones also. We have completed the licenses for the Southern Misses series of blueberries from Dr. NeSmith and are working on the new Krewer variety.

We currently have several other agreements out to be signed at this time. A few examples include perennial peanut, muscadine, and some international turfgrass licenses. I hope that UGARF and GSD will be able to finish a license agreement that was started back in March of last year after we were able to meet with the licensee at the Southern Seed Association meeting a couple of weeks ago.

Marketing

Blake Fleeman, Licensing/Marketing Manger

The trade show circuit has really picked up. The EDGE show in December started things with the debut of the new Georgia Integrated Cultivar Release System (GICRS) display. Erin was able to create a new brochure to assist potential licensees in understanding the concept of GICRS. Following the EDGE show, Roger and I attended the Southeast Regional Fruit & Vegetable Conference in Savannah. Attendance at this show set another record for at least the third year in a row. We were able to speak with several of the current and hopefully future licensees. During the show Dr. NeSmith announced that one of his new blueberry releases would be named after Dr. Gerald Krewer. While we were attending the SE Fruit and Vegetable Conference, Billy Skaggs with Georgia Crop Improvement took the new GICRS display to the National Peanut Buying Point meeting in Charleston SC. Billy had a lot of traffic at the booth during the show. The Georgia Peanut Farm show was the next stop on the circuit. Roger, Justin, and I were joined at this show in the GICRS booth by Brent Marable and Derek Eberhart from UGARF. Currently, there is a great deal of interest in Georgia-13M and Georgia-14N peanuts. From there Roger and I attended the Southern Seed Association meeting and were able to hear some very good speakers from around the Southeast and visited with some of our out of state licensees. The trade show circuit will continue for a few weeks, but the end is in sight for this season.



GSD at the SE Fruit and Vegetable Show



Dr. Gerald Krewer and Dr. Scott NeSmith



Justin Tanner, Blake Fleeman, Derek Eberhart, and Brent Marable at the Georgia Peanut Farm Show

Processing/Production

2015 Peanut Production

By Ralph Johnson, Seed/Production Manager-Plains

Since my last report in October we have completed harvesting, drying, grading, and warehousing 3,200 tons of Foundation in-shell peanut seed. We are now shelling GA 06G which is our eighth and last variety to shell. Shelling should be completed by mid-February and we will begin seed treating immediately. So far, all germinations have been good. We have the following poundage's by variety: TifNV- High Oleic 3,500 lbs., GA 04S 28,000 lbs., GA 14N 114,000 lbs., GA 11J 157,437 lbs., GA 12Y 245,000 lbs., Tifguard 290,000 lbs., and GA 13M 510,000 lbs. We are still shelling GA 06G, but should have 2.8-2.9 million pounds which is in line with our production goal. An additional note on GA 13M, this 510,000 lbs pounds of Foundation seed came from a planting of 14,100 lbs. of seed. That's an impressive increase!



2015 Soybean Production

By Doug McWhorter, Seed/Production Manager-Athens

We harvested almost 5000 bushels of the following varieties of soybeans this fall: G04-1618RR (AGS 828 RR), G03-1187RR (AGS 787RR), G12-PR7 R2 and G12-PR63 R2 (CZ 7070 RY). These soybeans are being processed. Preliminary germinations are very good for all varieties. We have sufficient amounts of Prichard RR, AGS Woodruff, G06-3182RR, and Cook in cold storage for 2015 plantings.

2015 Small Grain Production

By Doug McWhorter, Seed/Production Manager-Athens

PLAINS: A total of 212 acres of 8 wheat varieties (LANC8248-1, LA06146E-P4, LA3200E-2, GA 11E54, GA 10E46, LA 754, Baldwin, and AGS 2040) and 2 oat varieties (Horizon 270 & 201) were planted for this season.

ATHENS: A total of 273 acres of 10 wheat varieties (GA12E6, GA12LE28, GA12E33, 8641, Oglethorpe, GA11E51, GA10E29, AGS 2035, AGS 2038, and GA Gore) were planted for 2015. We have cold storage of the following varieties: AGS 2027 and USG 3120 wheat. We have 45 acres of Wrens Abruzzi rye in production for this season's Foundation production. Wheat fields look good (not great) and are tillering. Several of our fields have been treated for broad leaf weeds and ryegrass.

2015 Turf Production

By Doug McWhorter, Seed/Production Manager-Athens

All Foundation turf fields have been treated with pre-emergence chemicals. No off-types have been found in the dormant fields.

Paspalum:

Sea Star: One pending order at this time.

Sea Isle 1: No orders at this time.

Sea Isle 2000: No orders at this time.

Sea Isle Supreme: No orders at this time.

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Processing/Production Continued

Bermuda:

DT – 1: The Foundation field established with Super Sod in Marshallville is dormant, but has grown in well.

TifGrand: Companies in Costa Rica and China are working on license agreements.

TifDwarf: No orders at this time.

TifWay: We hope to be able to supply at least a couple of companies Foundation sprigs by late April – mid May.

TifEagle: One domestic order.

TifSport: A company in China is working on a license agreement.

Centipede:

TifBlair: No orders at this time.



Seed for Thought Continued

I bring this topic to your attention to make the point that many breeders, propagators, and marketers of new horticultural varieties are facing the same issues the major biotech/seed companies marketing new seeds faced in the late 1990's and the inventors of new computer software faced in an earlier decade. They are competing with a "black market" of their varieties that is not required to pay the research development costs or licensing fees required to legally have access to the improved variety. This results in an unfair competition favoring the "illegal players."

In many ways this issue falls into the category of "there is nothing new under the sun." If we are dedicated to stopping the propagation and sale of illegally obtained horticultural varieties, we need to look at what has been previously achieved with other technologies. In the case of many vegetative propagated horticultural varieties we must be willing to make certain we are following the "letter of the law" required by the U.S. Plant Patent Act, invoke a plant sourcing /verification or other form of quality assurance program, and be willing to make examples of a few of the industry's "bad players."

I realize this prescription is challenging to implement, but history suggests this approach has worked in other industries that have decided to make the changes necessary to enable vigorous protection of their intellectual property and make examples of the major "illegal players" pirating their products. This solution would not only be good for developers, propagators, and nurserymen and their bottom lines, but at the same time would be good for the consumer by allowing them to know they have purchased a "known" variety of high quality. In addition, consumers would have the confidence they are contributing to the development of even better plants for the future.

Important Dates

***Georgia Crop Improvement Annual Meeting,**
Athens, GA; March 10-11, 2015

***Georgia Seed Development Semi-Annual
Board Meeting,** Cordele, GA; May 27, 2015

Georgia Seed Development
is a proud member of
Georgia Grown, a program
of the Georgia Department
of Agriculture.
<http://georgiagrown.com>

