

Hybrid corn experiments helped company thrive

By Sheri Ann Richerson
The Courier Editor

Hybrid corn as we know it today did not have it's beginnings until the 1930's. Langdon Brothers Seed began in 1936. Friends and neighbors made comments about young Langdon experimenting on half an acre with hybrid corn stating that it was never going to catch on and that the experiments would cause the seed company to go bankrupt.

Almost seventy years later, Langdon Brothers Seed Company, located at 3590 South 100 East in Hartford City is still going strong. Hybrid corn is grown worldwide. Open pollinated corn is still grown by a

few but for the vast majority of people it has gone by the wayside.

Gary Langdon said he has seen other significant changes over the years as well. Soybeans have been introduced into their product line.

When soybeans first entered this country they were used strictly for hay crops.

Wheat and oat seeds have been added as well.

Thirty to forty years ago the Langdons' added small grass seeds such as clover and alfalfa to their line up.

Today they also sell lawn fertilizer and related products such as grub and dandelion control.

The exciting part to the story

is that a couple years ago Langdon Brothers' Lawn Fertilizer was introduced to the community.

"We wanted a program for our customers that was easy for them," Langdon said. "They can use this product from spring until fall. One fertilizer does it all now. It has the same analysis and they can still use it three to four times a year. It is registered with the state chemist at Purdue University as well."

While Langdon says the product does not have a catchy name, he says using the product will make lawn maintenance easier because people no longer need several different products at several different analyses to

properly fertilize their lawn.

Another unique aspect of Langdon Brothers Seeds is that they maintain lawn plots so that their customers can see the grasses.

"We encourage our customers to touch and walk on the plots," Langdon said. "It is like having an ongoing live brochure. Customers can see the grasses year round. It is a very uniuie program. We have been told by several suppliers that you almost have to go to a university to see plots similar to what we have here."

The most different aspect of the business according to Langdon is the diversity of seed they offer.

"We provide the newest genetics for seeds and the information to go along with it. We try to help our customers figure out what they need," Langdon said. "We feel like we do this well."

In regards to changes in agricultural products Langdon said these past five years have not necessarily been as fun as before due to increased paperwork, changing contracts and patents. However Langdon feels this has been the most exciting time due to the beginning of technology in agriculture.

"This may be the beginning of something great for agricultural down the road," Langdon said. "Big companies keep com-

ing into agricultural with chemicals and seeds. The downfall is the changes are overwhelming, especially to some of the farmers. The farmers have to work off a lower profit but deliver higher volumes to make a living. The farmers are not getting more on the market and they are paying twice the amount per bag of seed than what they were paying ten years ago."

Products such as Round-Up are helping by creating very clean soybean fields according to Langdon which does create a higher product output.

"We enjoy the seed business," Langdon concluded. "We hope to carry on for many more generations."

Agbest still leading the way for farmers years later

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Agricultural is the backbone of the United States, especially the mid-western region. Every change, every chemical ultimately affects millions of people and animals throughout the world.

Many of those changes in agricultural practices are happening as close as Blackford County.

Agbest is one local company that is at the forefront of many of the changes in the way local farmers will control weeds and pests this season.

Many farmers have chosen to use a no till method over the past few years. This has caused an increase in the use of chemicals to control weeds that would have been tilled under and possibly eliminated altogether after a number of years.

Jim Keesling said that he felt the no till method of farming has increased their business, however Marty Clock,

Agricultural Manager at the Gaston Agricultural Plant did not agree with this.

"I do not know of an increase in business due to the no till method," Clock said. "This method actually saves on input costs and doesn't increase business on the retail end."

While some new products have been introduced, Clock said that the majority of the products were not necessarily new, the formulations had just been changed on many products.

"I see a lot of different types of chemistry in the products," Clock said. "Round-Up is an older product that has been reformulated. We call it Glyphosate in the field. They have changed some of the surfactant which helps the product to work better."

Surfactant helps to deliver the active ingrediant in the weed killer to the plant. This helps the product to work more efficiently.

Clock who has been in the

business for over twenty-five years said these products were the safest ones they had ever handled.

"They are safer because contact herbicides do not have a soil residual. The absorption into the plants is equally safe," Clock said. "They do not alter the quality of the seed or the crop."

Clock said he felt people needed to be aware that the companies are trying to get

retail products to be safer to the environment.

"We are not trying to harm anyone or anything," Clock concluded. "We are simply trying to help the growers to grow better crops. The use of chemicals increases the crops yields. Without these products the infestation of pests and weeds would cause the growers output to be minimal."