

Directions

A Newsletter of Cornelius Seed.[®] Read it. Profit.

Fall 2014

Meet Dan Keleher – 2014 Seed Rep of the Year

The small yellow pickup truck pulled slowly into the yard. On top of it was a large Cornelius Seed sign. The young farmer stopped the work he was doing and watched the truck approach him. Out climbed the driver who talked the farmer into planting a bag of corn.

The driver of that pickup was the late Gerald Cornelius. The farmer was Dan Keleher of Cuba City, WI. The year was 1978, 36 years ago.

That early “trial” of Cornelius Seed led to Keleher accepting a seed dealership in 1983 and in 2014, Dan Keleher was honored as the company’s Seed Representative of the Year, the company’s highest honor bestowed upon its sales force.

Keleher calculates he’s sold more than 30-40,000 units of corn in that tenure. He has a large following in his customer base that stretches across southwestern Wisconsin. And he’s well known not only as a good farmer, but also as a great seedsman.

“People trust him,” says District Sales Manager Jeff Calvert. “And when you know your products, service your customers and properly place hybrids on the right fields to maximize yields, you’re going to build the following Dan has.”

Keleher, and his wife, Ellen, have farmed on the second generation farm for decades. And son, Bill, is



Dan Keleher, Chuck Cornelius, Bill Keleher

heavily involved in helping nurture the future of the farm. He works hand-in-hand with his father in both farming and in selling seed. At one time, he even served Cornelius Seed as the southwest Wisconsin District Sales Manager, but the lure of farming and ag finance called him to a career change in 2013 as an ag loan officer and farmer.

“I need to spend more time with the farm,” says Bill, “so I took a part time job as an ag loan officer and am able to work the farm more closely with dad.”

Dan Keleher does all the things great seed representatives do to nurture their business. He knows most seed is ordered in September

and October, so he makes early sales calls, using his corn and soybean plot and sequential customer field day as a mainstay to getting seed orders for the following year.

He plants a wide selection of corn hybrids and soybean varieties in his plot and spends a great deal of time studying them so he can talk about emergence to dry down and yield with customers. He notes all of it on every entry in the plot.

He sees his customers again after harvest and firms up their seed needs, as well as delivery and payment preferences. He delivers or has customers pick up seed and then sees them again during the summer. Keleher takes in every Cornelius

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meeting he can with the belief “I always learn something that I can use.”

The diversified grain and livestock farm (at one time a significant dairy as well) keeps both Keleher's busy,



Dan Keleher (left), visits with Wisconsin District Sales Manager Jeff Calvert prior to harvest. Keleher was named Cornelius Seed Representative of the Year for the past selling year.

but they have made the seed business a successful ag diversification program in their plans.

“Having a seed dealership makes you a better farmer,” says Keleher. “You really fine tune your knowledge of products and know right where to use what products at what populations...and you know what products not to use in certain situations. Avoiding failure is part of being successful.”

“Calling on customers has another benefit. You learn what they're doing and what's going on with different farms. Some of that you can carry back into your operation,” he says.

“And a seed dealership is off-season work. It lets you farm and

serve customers at the same time since they don't overlap in workload demand or time.

The Seed Representative of the Year description states, “The award goes to the seed representative who most closely reflects the values of Cornelius Seed. Those values center on trust, integrity, exceptional performance on behalf of customers and fairness.

Those reasons are why Dan Keleher won the award.

Editor's Note: If you'd like to add knowledge of product management as well as income to your farm operation as a seed representative, call David Aeschliman at 800/218-1862 to discuss details.

Managing Your Way Through \$3.50 Corn

With farmers coming to grips with the fact commodity prices probably aren't going to be making a comeback soon, 2015 decisions about what crops to plant, acreages of each, hybrids and varieties to select and how much money to spend on what inputs are requiring more thought.

Recent discussions among farmers have revealed several cost-cutting ideas, including less nitrogen and overall fertilizer, reducing populations, buying fewer traits in corn, putting corn through livestock instead of into storage, investing in commodities brokerage counsel and backing off of new equipment purchases.

Equipment dealers tell us new machinery sales are cooling off, but used equipment is steady and possibly up. That makes perfect sense as farmers turn to equipment savings by repairing older equipment or buying used. But unlike farm machinery purchases, you have to

buy seed and fertilizer if you're going to have a crop...they are, in essence, perennial purchases.

“So, how do you turn to cost cutting without...reducing your income?”

So, how do you turn to cost cutting without damaging your crop yields which also reduces your income? What priorities should a corn or bean grower place on different cost-cutting measures?

“The one thing you don't want to do is sacrifice yield,” says Chuck Cornelius, president of Cornelius Seed. “I encourage corn growers to study different ways to hit their yield goals, but buying less expensive seed from a company can end up being just the opposite...for example, buying down on trait packages will require additional insect, and potentially, weed control measures.

“I have no problem with someone reducing traits if they're rotating crops in low insect-pressure

situations or if they're prepared to manage and spend money on insect control another way. But, I still think the fully traited products like SmartStax give you the most effective and efficient yield under disease and insect pressure. The R.O.I. is there in plant health, standability, less ear droppage, more



Chuck Cornelius

yield, complete insect control and income...you don't have to fight your way there; you just plant it and manage it correctly."

"If corn growers don't want to use SmartStax, we still have a number of traited products as well as conventional ones to plant," says Cornelius. "I think the key point is this; if you align the right traited or conventional products to the right field under the right management, I'm perfectly fine with it...but cutting traits to save money can easily be a step in the wrong direction."

What you may save in the price of seed can often easily be made up on the marketing side. For example, let's say you get your seed costs down \$50 per bag of hybrid seed corn from last year. That sounds terrific, but it's easily offset with informed marketing. For example, in mid-September, there was a \$.78 per bushel spread for delivered corn between the river market in the Quad Cities and the grain processors in Cedar Rapids. If your corn yielded 160 bushels per acre and one bag of corn planted 2.5 acres, that single market awareness would have pocketed nearly \$250 more bag. (160 bushels x 2.5 acres x \$.78 market difference). That makes negotiating price, or worse yet, sacrificing yield, seem inconsequential.

"Price reductions in the bag of corn pale in comparison to what good, informed marketing can accomplish," says Cornelius.

Rich Balvanz, owner of AMS Commodities in Marion, IA, agrees. "It's time farmers get as good at marketing as they are at producing. Agriculture has always focused on the ability to produce, and now it's time to focus on the ability

to maximize income through marketing savvy and awareness. It's going to be crucial in the next few years."

Farmers have moved to insect-protected corn hybrids. Some concern themselves with moving away from the convenience and simplicity of using fully or partially traited hybrids.

"I don't like the idea of having to re-learn insecticide brands, products, rates and application windows, let alone refurbishing equipment that has set idle far too long," says one corn grower.



Rich Balvanz

New Triple Pro Hybrid Discounts Available

Cornelius Seed reduced the price of its triple pro (which offers reduced refuge, corn borer, root worm and glyphosate resistance) by \$15 per unit. And Monsanto has added \$10 per unit rebate if growers use either Force or Precept insecticide.

These products can be used in lieu of SmartStax® in corn-on-corn situations IF you use an insecticide with them.

"That's a substantial reduction in operating costs," points out Cornelius. "We made an aggressive move in price here to assist our customers in saving money."

The company also has the same trait packages available in LibertyLink® products and AgriSure's new E-Z Refuge products. Ask your seed representative about them as well.

Double Pro Hybrids Still A Great Deal

"Some will decide they just want to use a root worm control insecticide or don't even need root worm protection. That's when corn growers need to take a look at double pro hybrids. They are a hot item this year as growers know they still get some level of corn borer protection and Roundup use. For a few dollars more per bag over conventionals, they are a great buy," says Cornelius.

We have seen more corn borer damage this fall than we have for many years. As more acres are planted to non-Bt hybrids we will see elevated corn borer numbers. This will heighten the need for corn borer insecticide applications and increase the return on in-plant corn borer protection.



"More than ever, I think corn growers need to talk through all of the options with their seed representatives," notes Cornelius. "Informed seed representatives are worth their weight in gold, particularly this year, as they coach and guide their customers into making good, economical decisions.

Clearly, that's what's important."

Yield Results Available Instantly

Cornelius Seed has always taken great pride in its product performance. And now, the company is making those performance results nearly instantly available to you. Throughout the 2014 harvest, follow these simple steps to access the updated yield results at www.corneliusseed.com.

You can view and print yield results from our web site for current and past Profit Plots and yield checks throughout our districts by following these simple steps:

1. Visit our web site at www.corneliusseed.com
2. Click on the 'Performance' tab.
3. Make your selections on how you choose to view performance results and then click 'Search'.
4. You can now view results based on your selections. Here you also have the option to filter your search by a specific hybrid or variety.
5. If you wish to print result(s), click 'Printable View' in the bottom right-hand corner of each desired entry. A new window will open allowing you to 'Print this page'.

You can also review third party testing (Corn: F.I.R.S.T. Trials; Iowa State University Crop Trials; Illinois Corn Hybrid Variety Trials; University of Wisconsin Corn Evaluation Program; and Soybeans: F.I.R.S.T. Trials; Iowa State University Crop Trials) under the Performance tab as well.

Ordering seed before November 10 will get you the best seasonal prices left for 2015 seed needs. The orders prior to that time receive the following benefits:

1. First-come, first-serve orders filled with preferences for hybrids and seed size availability.
2. A 10% early pay discount for all payments made with an order.
3. A 2% higher discount for all other payment periods beyond this one.
4. A \$2 per corn unit discount on price. Combine these discounts with Cornelius Seed's industry-leading price rollbacks from last year and you have some of the finest hybrids and varieties in the industry at some of the leading prices available.

**Aggressive Discounts
Offered**

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