A holistic approach to farming

For Brian Chorney, farm management is more than just planning a single crop year. “We’re trying to ensure that what we are doing is complementary in one year to future years of operation,” says Chorney. By taking a more holistic approach to farming, Chorney aims to grow crops that build the soil and increase productivity for future generations.

“Biotech crops have given us the opportunity to look at our crop rotation on a holistic approach.”

Chorney operates John Chorney Farms in East Selkirk, Manitoba, Canada – a farm established by his grandfather John Chorney back in 1918. “If you go back to my father’s day, he farmed without crop protection products but summer fallow [leaving land uncropped during the summer to control weeds with cultivation] was a standard practice and the crops [back then] were nowhere near as high yielding as they currently are.”

Today, Chorney has access to a wide range of tools to improve crop productivity and enable sustainable farming. “Biotechnology adds tools to our toolbox as farmers. We can look at different methods of controlling weeds,” says Chorney, who uses biotech products such as herbicide-tolerant soybeans and canola to control...
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“Farmers are a lot more aware of climate change,” says Chorney. “All of our practices — whether reduced tillage, the fuel we are burning, our fertilizer practices, or the crop protection products we are using — we are definitely more conscious of it and are using the latest technology to ensure we are not having an environmental impact.”

With all of these advancements on the John Chorney Farm over the years, Brian still looks forward to the next innovations in plant science. “We need to address some of the agronomic issues around crop production,” says Chorney, who identifies increased fertilizer efficiencies, shatter-resistant canola, and improved crop stress tolerance as areas for future improvements.

“I think future generations on the farm are going to have all kinds of opportunities and challenges to meet production requirements,” says Chorney. “I believe that our stewardship of the land right now is critical to ensure that crop production is going to be able to meet the production challenges of the future.”

difficult weeds with only one product. “Prior to crop protection products and biotechnology, the only method of controlling weeds was cultivation. Now I don’t have planned summer fallow and I can clean up fields by growing different crops.”

Thanks to advancements in plant breeding, Chorney now has access to a wide variety of crops to choose from. “Biotech crops have given us the opportunity to look at our crop rotation on a holistic approach. If you look at a canola, winter wheat, soybean, spring wheat type rotation, it is a diverse approach that is sustainable long term for our farm viability,” says Chorney.

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Chorney’s integrated approach extends into how he protects the environment, including the waterways. “I think that protecting the waterways is kind of the same practice as protecting our land resource. Water and land is what we use to produce our crops. It’s important for the long term sustainability of agriculture and society as a whole,” says Chorney who points to air induction nozzles that reduce spray drift and secure on-farm storage for fertilizer.

Practices to mitigate climate change are another part of Chorney’s farm management plan. “We are using a 10% biodiesel blend in our fuel to reduce the greenhouse gas impact of the tractors we run. We are reducing the tillage operations from what we used to do to reduce the number of gallons of diesel fuels we use on a per acre basis,” says Chorney.