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KWS' DryDown+ varieties: Harvesting grain corn with less than 20% grain moisture

New political requirements lead to the fact that growing grain corn is an increasingly attractive option for many farmers in Europe. KWS' DryDown+ grain corn varieties are characterized by very early flowering and an extremely fast and strong dry-down (drying capacity). These properties allow cultivation for the first time in regions previously dominated by winter cereals and also strengthen sustainable cultivation in typical grain corn regions.

The varieties that are being developed in the EDDI (European Dry-Down Initiative) breeding program - which was developed especially for this purpose - can be harvested very early or with a very low moisture content (<20%). The low grain moisture significantly reduces the drying effort after harvest. As a result, this means lower drying costs, decreasing greenhouse gas emissions, and less labor for farmers. Furthermore, the secure maturation of the varieties makes grain corn a profitable cultivation option for the first time, even in previously untypical regions. The first DryDown+ varieties will be registered for the next growing season in Germany, France and Poland.

In line with the Green Deal and the farm-to-fork strategy, the EU Commission has issued new decisions on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Among other things, extended crop rotations are intended to help reducing the use of crop protection products. Here grain corn will become a worthwhile cultivation alternative to stubble wheat. "The current decisions on the EU Commission's common agricultural policy are a call to show new ways in arable farming and offer farmers practicable solutions. Profitable summer crops make it easier for farmers to decide to expand their crop rotation," says Volker Utesch, Head of the Corn Business Unit at KWS. "With our DryDown+ grain corn varieties, we do just that: we enable successful grain corn cultivation in typical winter cereal regions and strengthen existing grain corn regions in a sustainable way with the specific variety traits."

Internal trials show that reducing crop moisture from 30 to 20 percent can reduce necessary drying costs by up to 50 percent. With KWS' DryDown+ varieties this reduction is already a reality in regions with a temperature total of at least 1,200 heat units during the vegetation phase. But KWS does not stop at this point. Drying costs for grain corn should no longer be the main cost driver in grain corn cultivation in the future. Grain moisture levels of with a maximum of 15% at harvest are the final goal.

However, the breeders' focus here is not exclusively on rapid maturing behavior and early flowering. "Our main goal is to accelerate dry-down, i.e. the drying behavior of the varieties," explains Christof Bolduan, who is responsible for the new breeding program at KWS. Additional breeding goals are a high and reliable grain yield, stability, healthy maturing behavior and a wide harvest window. Christof Bolduan: "We are investing seven figures a year in this breeding program and aim to achieve stable grain moisture levels of less than 20

percent in the medium term. Varieties from the breeding program for grain corn, with a superior dry-down, have great potential to expand crop rotations, especially in typical winter cereal growing regions.”

About KWS

KWS is one of the world's leading plant breeding companies. Over 5,000 employees* in more than 70 countries generated net sales of around \$1,94 billion in the fiscal year 2022/2023. A company with a tradition of family ownership, KWS has operated independently for 165 years. It focuses on plant breeding and the production and sale of seed for corn, sugarbeet, cereals, vegetables, oilseed rape and sunflower. KWS uses leading-edge plant breeding methods to continuously improve yield for farmers and plants' resistance to diseases, pests and abiotic stress. To that end, the company invested more than \$320 million last fiscal year in research and development.

*excl. seasonal workforce

More information: www.kws.com. Follow us on X (Twitter) at https://twitter.com/KWS_Group.

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