

# How Farmers Can Empower Their Seed Decision

By working alongside agronomist and experts, growers can feel confident in their cropping decisions

In the heart of Latvia, Kaspars Antipins and his father work together across their 3,400 hectares to maximize their return on every meter. About 600 kilometers away in Estonia, Mikk Tutt and his father farm about 500 hectares including winter wheat, spring barley, winter barley, rye, winter oilseed rape and peas.

“It’s always risky when we look at new varieties,” Tutt says. “We prefer the seeds that we have used for many years because we know what to expect but we know each year we need to look at new options to profit from breeding gain, too.”

For each of these farmers, hybrid and variety selection each year takes hard work, research and a careful balance of venture versus reward. This underscores the importance of not only the information provided by seed companies about varieties, but getting local results, too.

## Determine Seed Priorities Before Purchase

Just like every field has different characteristics, so does every crop and variety. Once a rotation is established, take time to document needs for each field by crop.

“Until recently, the crop’s potential has been our highest consideration for selecting crop varieties,” says Antipins. “Now with the changing world situations and attitudes toward pesticides our priorities are changing. The yield potential needs to go hand-in-hand with disease resistance.”



One company, RAPOOL RING, is dedicated to not only breeding excellent varieties in yield potential, but is also searching for insect and disease pest tolerance within the genetics. This would reduce the overall need for pesticides because the plant would have internal protection.

In addition to disease resistance, insect tolerance is also high in the priority list as insect infestation is another serious threat to profitability—especially if pesticide use is shuttered.

“For us in Estonia, winter hardiness is very important also,” Tutt says. “For example, about five years ago we planted six varieties of rapeseed to spread our risk and the only seed that survived was from RAPOOL-RING and that was in minus 20 degrees with no snow to insulate it.”

Another concern for many farmers is fertilizer use, especially with record nitrogen prices this year. Greater efficiency in key crops such as winter oilseed rape, corn and others will be critical to enhancing per hectare profitability.

## Find Localized Results and Information

What works for Tutt in Estonia might not work in Latvia for Antipins, every field – down to the meter – has different needs. Because of this, it’s important to not only work with seed representatives who know the local area but it’s also valuable to test products on owned fields.

“I’m responsible for every management decision on the farm,” Antipins says. “My field is not the same situation as others. For about six years we’ve tried around 20 varieties every year to see them in reality.”

Test plots or side-by-side tests, as they’re referred to in some countries, help showcase stand-out products that actually perform in local conditions. It takes setting aside some acres but can pay in dividends.

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“When we have done the test plots we’re finding that, in oilseed rape, RAPOOL-RING is consistently providing the best value,” Mkk says. “In addition, their agronomists work with my agronomist to find the best varieties for our area.”

It starts by knowing what to expect from seed varieties and finding smart placements on fields. RAPOOL-RING’s agronomic advisors work hand-in-hand with farmers to help them understand how a variety might – or might not – work on their farm. They help create customized solutions so farmers can see what works best for them.

This advisory relationship helps remove some of the guesswork.

Instead of guessing what varieties might work on their farms, Antipins and Mkk review data provided by seed sales representatives to get a better idea of seed adaptability for their hectares. From there they perform their own tests and ultimately isolate seed varieties that are most suited to not only their soils, but their management preferences as well.

“We combine years of data and thousands of research tests to create a wholistic view of what seed varieties will do in certain conditions,” says Jeanne Geißler, RAPOOL RING. “It’s exciting to partner this knowledge with farmers to help them find solutions that work on their fields.”

