

Bayer's short stature corn to hit Canada in 2029

The appeal of the short corn here is expected to be its increased spray accessibility

BY JOHN MINER, Ontario Farmer

Tavistock - Mainly marketed in the US for withstanding high winds and challenging weather conditions, the sales pitch when Bayer brings its short stature corn to Canada will be somewhat different.

The advantage anticipated for the short stature corn in growing areas such as Ontario is the accessibility it will provide farmers for applying product later in the season.

"It allows more ground application to get in with a fungicide as opposed to having to rely on helicopter aerial application later in the season because the crop is too high," said Dave Kikkert, Bayer's Canada corn and soybean portfolio lead. "It also makes fertilizer application easier."

Bayer agricultural retailers attending a field day at the company's research farm near Tavistock were told the short stature corn, Preceon, will likely be introduced to Canada in 2029.

Bayer is already selling a version of its short stature corn in the U.S. that was developed with conventional breeding techniques. The Preceon corn planned for Canada will be developed with a biotech approach, said Bob Thirwall, a market development agronomist with Bayer Crop Science.

The biotech short stature corn will have more consistent ear height on every stalk than the current version grown in the US, he said.

"In a dry year sometimes with the native trait the ear height can go a littler lower and sometimes that is tricky to pick up with a combine header," Thirwall said.

The Preceon short stature corn is typically about 18 inches shorter than full-stature hybrids and has



Bayer market development agronomist Bob Thirwall said the short stature corn that will be sold in Canada will have consistent ear height



The Preceon corn grown at Bayer's Tavistock area research farm is about 18 inches shorter than regular hybrids

a wider stem than full-stature hybrids.

A joint research trial with Bayer at Purdue University in 2023 found the short-stature hybrid maintained strong yields - 240 to 260 bushels per acre at sites in northwest Indiana and 250 to 300 bushels per acre in central Indiana.

Bayer is forecasting the potential global market for Preceon at 220 million acres.

US interest in shorter corn that can withstand wind storms was prompted by a Derecho in August 2020 that hit the corn belt. It's estimated the wind storm caused more than \$7 billion US

in corn crop damage.

Bayer isn't the only company working on developing short stature corn. Corteva has indicated it has trials underway on short stature corn.

Another innovation in Bayer's pipeline that will be available to corn growers in a few years is corn with a fourth generation rootworm trait (CRW4), Thirwall said.

CRW4 will have two new BT proteins that have never been used in corn before, offering a different source of protection against corn rootworm, he said.

Final figures on prison farm cost released

The total construction costs completed and budgeted for worked out to just over \$26 million.

BY IAN CUMMING, Ontario Farmer

The June 2018 announcement stated that building an 80-cow dairy barn at the Kingston Joyceville penitentiary facility would cost \$4.3 million. The subsequent contract awarded in the spring of 2022 for the same-sized facility was \$10,488,000.

The final tally was released recently by the federal government, eight months after a specific request for a line-by-line itemizing of costs and use by local MP Scott Reid.

The total construction costs completed and budgeted for worked out to just over \$26 million.

Consultant and engineering fees for the barn construction, plus meals and travel, totaled \$4,589,045. Labour and material to construct the barn came to \$13,195,143, with completion 11 months after the announced completion date.

Some older sheds and barns were renovated to

temporarily house the cattle that the committee to save the farm had purchased, but now house some heifers. That renovation cost was \$3,210,974.

Milking commenced in October 2024, with 58 cows, heifers and calves on the facility.

They have until October 2025 to reach the allotted 100 kg of non-saleable research quota that has been granted by the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. They project it will take 80 milking cows to fill that quota.

There were 18 head purchased from the Pen Farm Herd Coop, although there is no breakdown as to what was paid per cow, heifer or calf. There have been invoices obtained by Ontario Farmer showing them paying around \$7,000 per milking cow last fall.

McGill is conducting research on the farm and requested some changes to the barn interior to help facilitate it. Those changes cost an additional \$1,772,000.

They included revising interior gates and pens, six new exterior doors, troughs, cow back scratchers, cameras, plus additional concrete, septic and electrical work. There was \$65,000 spent on a new

generator for the calf barn, which was required by the researchers.

The present research is focusing on transitional housing which will bring in \$8,000 a month in revenue to the prison farm. The other research is on environmental enrichment which will bring in \$5,800 of monthly income.

The milk cheque, when it reaches filling the full 100 kilos of quota, is projected to be \$58,000 per month.

The main monthly expenses to run the research barn are \$56,700 for staff salaries, which includes additional security and supervision, \$1,800 for vet care, \$6,500 for feed, and \$5,000 for facility and equipment maintenance.

There are 12 to 16 offenders working, not only in the dairy barn, but also in the surrounding farm fields and in their horticulture division.

There was also a funding amendment made by the government awarding \$3,269,234 to a major contractor involved, which has an expiry date of Dec 31, 2026. There is no documentation provided on what that future, potential construction or renovations are for.

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