

Corteva Agriscience™ generates new dynamics in Bulgarian agriculture for sustainable growth and market breakthroughs

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Interview with Ivan Drazhev, Marketing Manager of Corteva Agriscience™ Balkans and Product Manager Seeds Bulgaria

Mr. Drazhev, Bulgarian grain production is closing a strong year. This gratifying fact has triggered various comments. Corteva Agriscience, as a structure-defining global company in the seed and

agrochemical industry, entirely focused on agriculture and holding leading positions in Bulgaria as well, certainly has its own position on the matter...

Over the past 30 years, grain production in our country has reached global standards in terms of intensity, sustainability, creativity and yields. The results are convincing. A few examples. A yield of 150–200 kg/da of sunflower 30 years ago was considered something great. Today, sunflower hybrids have raised the bar to a minimum yield potential of 350 kg/da. In the not-so-distant past, 400–500 kg of maize per decare was a dream yield. Now yields of at least 700–800 kg/da are a real reality. The leap in yields in wheat and rapeseed is also impressive in its own right. Records are falling one after another!

How should these facts be interpreted?

The large-scale organizational, structural and technological reform of Bulgarian grain production, and the innovative product and professional capabilities of multinational companies – producers and suppliers of seeds, plant protection products and fertilizers – are at the core of this far-reaching transformation. Another

indispensable factor in this process is the growing, increasingly dynamic and energetic professional competence of our farmers. As well as the new vision of connectivity between commercial companies and producers. Thanks to this informational connectivity and cooperation in action, there is an unconditionally shared responsibility for every single undertaking, and a maximally high degree of correctness and objectivity. Today, I am convinced, every farmer in Bulgaria is capable of making his own professional choice of hybrids and seed varieties, plant protection products and fertilizers. To guarantee a high success index, to demonstrate his own individuality and internal potential. In two words: this is the power of knowing!

What are the challenges in grain production today?

Agricultural production is facing an unprecedented dilemma – to ensure sustainable growth and provide high-quality food for the constantly growing world population in a complex climatic, phytosanitary and economic environment.

I will try to explain this phenomenal situation. On the one hand, the climatic and phytosanitary environment continues to become more complicated. Which means that biotic and abiotic factors and pests in agricultural crops will create new challenges and problems. On the other hand, the prices of production inputs are rising. The trend has stable parameters (the fertilizer market, for example, is a sufficiently indicative example for 2021).

Thirdly, the EU “Green Deal” in the plant protection sector has triggered strongly restrictive measures regarding a number of active substances in plant protection products that were widely used until now. The insecticide portfolio has been subjected to the strongest pressure. First, carbamate insecticides were banned, followed by neonicotinoids. In practice, from the neonicotinoids only acetamiprid, the active substance of the insecticide Mospilan, popular in our country, has remained. Last year, organophosphorus insecticides were also withdrawn from use. For the moment, among the widely used insecticides, the pyrethroids have “survived”. Restrictions in other groups of pesticides – fungicides and herbicides – have also removed many widely used products from commercial portfolios. But in the coming years this trend will not stop and will continue.

Of course, the global agrochemical industry has not remained passive. The scientific and discovery potential of the leading multinational R&D companies has been activated at full speed! **Corteva Agriscience™** is actively participating in this large-scale transformation. I will mention in passing, very briefly, only one of the high-value achievements of **Corteva Agriscience**. **Lumiposa™ 625 FS** is the new unique insecticide with an active base (cyantraniliprole) from a new chemical group (anthranilic diamides). The insecticide, in the form of a liquid suspension concentrate for seed treatment with systemic and contact action, is already approved for use for seed treatment of rapeseed against the main pests, and a large number of companies offering rapeseed are using it. Lumiposa is expected soon to receive registration for the entire European Union for seed treatment of maize against wireworms, cutworms and Diabrotica.

Quellex® – Truly the new herbicide!

The question is, can a grain farmer be successful and profitable in this force majeure environment?

What is the horizon? What is the right path?

The Bulgarian grain producer has at his disposal sufficiently high-quality product, technological, technical and capital resources and integrated solutions for their use, and is capable of anticipating challenges and responding adequately and in a timely manner. Furthermore, as I already mentioned, crop yields are increasing at a steady pace. Purchase prices are also rising. For 2020 and 2021 they are significantly higher compared to 2018 and 2019. The purchase of sunflower, for example, in 2020 started from BGN 600/t and reached BGN 1,000/t. At the beginning of the 2021 marketing campaign, the price per ton started from BGN 850 and reached BGN 1,150/t. In 2018 and 2019 a ton of sunflower was purchased for BGN 500–600.

Under these circumstances, in this highly dynamic and contradictory situation, the Bulgarian producer has sufficiently reliable tools to succeed, to make a breakthrough, to cope with deficits, and to build a sustainable perspective for his responsible business.

What is the visionary mission, responsibility and involvement of Corteva Agriscience™, market leader for yet another year in the production and trade of sunflower and maize seeds in Bulgaria under the Pioneer brand, in the sustainable growth of the production of these two strategic crops in our country?

Corteva Agriscience™ offers reliable solutions in an uncertain environment. As far as the uncertain environment is concerned, I mean above all the changing climate in Bulgaria. The country is increasingly approaching the conditions of the Mediterranean region – it is characterized by high temperatures during the vegetation period and a pronounced moisture deficit. These factors also affect the phytosanitary situation. We are witnessing the emergence of new races of broomrape and downy mildew in sunflower crops. The composition and aggressiveness of weeds is changing.

The response of **Corteva Agriscience** is sufficiently motivating! The new generation of hybrids and plant protection products is on the market, innovations are coming one after another. The company offers on the Bulgarian market Pioneer Protector Broomrape sunflower hybrids with genetic resistance to all broomrape races identified and spread so far in Bulgaria.

The introduction of the sunflower seed treatment **Lumisena™ 200 FS** is a super innovation, a kind of revolution in the fight against downy mildew. The active base **Zorvec active™** (the trade name of **oxathiapiprolin**, 200 g/l) is from a new chemical group, with an absolutely different mode of action from the known competing products. The fungicide acts and is active against all stages of the pathogen's life cycle. The full systemic action of **Lumisena** contributes to better

healthy development of the root system and the above-ground parts of the plants. It guarantees reliable protection in the early sensitive phase of young plants from germination to the 8-leaf stage of sunflower.

Express 50® SG* is the only registered herbicide for ExpressSun sunflower hybrids offered by **Pioneer**, Syngenta and other companies. It is used in combination with the adjuvant Vivolt™ 90. It successfully controls during the vegetation period annual and perennial broadleaf weeds, including highly problematic species such as creeping thistle, jimsonweed, field bindweed, black nightshade.

The sunflower genetics of **Corteva Agriscience** is top level, with a wide-ranging profile. The product list includes high-yielding hybrids from all segments, including the new generation ExpressSun tolerant hybrids (P64LE162, P63LE166). In 2021, the high-yielding Clearfield Plus** hybrid (P64LP146) with genetic resistance to the most virulent broomrape race G+ made its debut, and in 2022 it is complemented by two new Clearfield Plus** hybrids – P64LP170 and P64LP180. **Corteva Agriscience** is the first company that offered high-oleic sunflower hybrids with ExpressSun technology in 2016 (P64HE118), and since 2020 it has added two new hybrids – P64HE133 and P64HE144. The conventional sunflower hybrids (P64LL125, P64BB01) of **Corteva Agriscience** continue to hold leading positions on the large Bulgarian market, and in 2022 a new high-yielding conventional hybrid – P64LL164 – is being introduced.

The Pioneer brand of Corteva Agriscience has for many years been preferred by Bulgarian maize producers. The Optimum AQUAmax hybrids reshaped the market space and made a powerful breakthrough. What is this boom due to?

Optimum AQUAmax hybrids are created with the patented AYT system – a technology for accelerating the yield potential of hybrids. The hybrids from this line have a higher and more stable yield potential under stressful climatic conditions – drier weather, limited moisture conditions and high temperatures during the vegetation period.

This highly desired profile of Optimum AQUAmax maize hybrids is a pinnacle achievement of the discovery abilities of Pioneer breeders. The plants develop vigorously in the early stages after emergence, the stalk is strong from the root to the tassel, the strongly developed root system ensures better uptake of nutrients and water, the Stay-green effect is an advantage that stimulates photosynthesis. With less water, the maize plant forms the grains and uses water much more efficiently under drier, moisture-limited conditions. Of the first 10 most widely grown Pioneer maize hybrids in Bulgaria, 9 are Optimum

AQUAmax. In 2020, three hybrids from this elite selection – P8834, P9889 and P0217 – were introduced in our country; in 2021 – P9300 and P9610. In 2022, the new AQUAmax hybrids P8904 and P9985 will join the team of winners. The Optimum AQUAmax breeding project is multifaceted. Part of its philosophy is the continuous building upon what has been achieved so far with even better and more innovative solutions. We are witnessing applied magic – the talent to stay the course against the challenges of the market, the competition and time!

**Express is a registered trademark of FMC.*

***Clearfield Plus is a registered trademark of BASF.*