

Discussing biological solutions with your customers

When it comes to using new products on their operations, farmers often have a healthy dose of skepticism—and for good reason. Farmers can't afford to use additional inputs that don't add to their ROI. And these days, one category of solutions is getting a lot of attention while raising more than a few eyebrows. That category is biologicals.

What are biologicals?

Biologicals are naturally derived, sustainable products that can be used alongside more traditional synthetic solutions. Biologicals are not necessarily organic-certified, but they can be.

Biological solutions are made for a wide range of crops and fall into different categories, including biostimulants, biocontrol products and pheromones. Biostimulants are meant to enhance plant vitality and growth to optimize yield potential. Biocontrol products, like the name implies, offer natural pest-control solutions. Finally, pheromones offer more options for pest control.

It's very likely your customers have heard about biologicals. They aren't entirely new to agriculture. However, the category has been getting a lot of attention recently because these solutions are becoming more widely available—and with wider availability comes more products that work and, unfortunately, more products that might not do what they claim.

So how can you be sure you're recommending solutions that will actually work for your farmers?

"The most important step you can take when selling and using biologicals is to make sure you're working with a company you trust," says Ryan Ridder, U.S. Product Manager, Fungicides and Biologicals, Corteva Agriscience. "If that manufacturer has been there for you in the past and brought you products that work for your customers, that's a great place to start."

Talking about biologicals

Ridder says it's understandable that there would be some confusion about biologicals for you and your customers. The seemingly sudden rush of product availability can naturally lead to uncertainty.

"The good news is that many biological products are coming to market now because scientists have been researching and testing them for years to make sure they work," Ridder says. "Corteva Agriscience requires years of testing to ensure we pinpoint aspects like the right application timing and rates to get optimal results."

So what is the best approach in talking with your farmers about these new solutions going forward? Ridder has three suggestions:

- 1. Know your customers' needs:** You know your customers and you understand their operations better than almost anyone. Use this knowledge to figure out what their needs are—what might be lacking in their current programs—and how biological solutions can fit those needs.
- 2. Research biological solutions:** Again, the most important step to take when researching biological solutions is to first turn to a company you know you can trust. Then talk with your trusted advisers and see what advice they can offer. You also can turn to reputable publications and websites to learn more. Finally, it's always a good idea to try your own field trials and test plots to see what works well in your backyard.
- 3. Set farmer expectations:** One more very essential step to take is to set your farmers' expectations with biological products. Biologicals are meant to work side by side with traditional synthetic solutions, not replace them. So farmers should not expect to totally change their inputs.

In addition, biological solutions can sometimes take a few seasons of use before their benefits become entirely clear. It's a good idea for your customers to give biologicals time before throwing in the towel.



Biological solutions to consider

Biologicals are certainly a hot topic right now, and Ridder says it's clear they'll be more than a flash in the pan.

"Biologicals are going to help shape the future of farming, and it's very exciting to be a part of it," Ridder says. "With these solutions, farmers will have so many more options and new modes of action to keep their farms healthy and productive today and tomorrow."

Corteva has been working alongside some of the most prominent biological technology companies to bring a range of solutions to market over the next few years. Here are three of those solutions:

- **Utrisha™ N nutrient efficiency optimizer**—a biostimulant that naturally captures nitrogen from the air for crops to use to optimize plant growth and production for maximum yield potential.
- **Sosdia™ Stress and Sosdia™ Stress Plus abiotic stress mitigators**—biostimulants that help crops overcome stressors such as soil salinity, drought and extreme temperatures.

For more information about biological solutions for your customers' farms, talk with your local Corteva Agriscience representative to get your (and your customers') questions answered.

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