

ADVERTISEMENT

Small firm's large find: Seed raises bean yields

11:39 PM, Oct. 23, 2009 | 6 Comments

Recommend

Be the first of your friends to recommend this.

Recommend

0

0

A A

momslike me.com



Mark Seed President Mark Terpstra shows off a soybean plant ready for harvest in a field near the company plot on Friday. His company has annual revenues of about \$6 million. / JOHN GAPS III/THE REGISTER

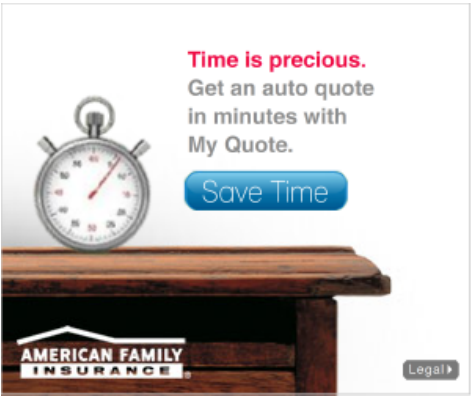
Written by
DAN PILLER

FILED UNDER

Business

Perry, Ia. — Mark Terpstra hopes his Cyst Tech soybean seed - which he says will neutralize the yield-robbing nematode parasite - can make Mark Seed Co. of Perry into what he calls "the Intel of seeds."

To achieve market share numbers of 75 percent or better, as Intel does in the computer chip industry, would be a big order for Terpstra's little operation, which sells primarily soybean and some corn seeds to about 2 000 customers in Iowa and neighboring



AMERICAN FAMILY INSURANCE

Legal

ADVERTISEMENT

MORE HEADLINES

- State receives grant for energy project
- Hard work = good food
- Terrus optimistic despite losing Principal contract

MOST POPULAR

- 1. Hansen: Iowa State will struggle if TV cash disappears
- 2. Register exclusive: Inside look at Cy-Hawk Trophy discussions
- 3. Third of Iowa schools missed achievement targets
- 4. Head of U of Iowa Hospitals radiology dept. accused of derogatory remarks
- 5. Iowa teacher pleads not guilty in student sex case



Hy-Vee Top Employee

Park Inn Hotel, last standing

2011 Cy-Hawk game preview

corn seeds to about 2,000 customers in Iowa and neighboring states. Mark Seed Co. has annual revenues of about \$6 million.

Where giants such as Monsanto and Pioneer Hi-Bred have huge laboratories, greenhouses and test plots worldwide, Terpstra has 52 storage bins in Perry, a 70-acre test plot on the edge of town, and another plot in Bedford in southwest Iowa.

But he does have Cyst Tech, a new soybean seed germplasm for which he obtained a patent two years ago after two decades of testing and trying.

Cyst Tech is not a genetically modified technology. Rather, it is a new germplasm breed that Terpstra says neutralizes the millions of tiny nematodes that live underground and suck the nutrients out of soybean plant roots.

Cyst Tech will enable farmers to plant soybeans continuously on the same ground, Terpstra said.

His brashest claim is that Cyst Tech seeds will help farmers get soybean yields of 80 bushels per acre and more,

big talk against the national yield average of about 48 bushels per acre and even the Iowa average of about 55 bushels per acre.

But while corn yields in bushels per acre have risen by 32 percent nationally since 2000, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture statistics, comparable soybean per bushel yields have risen 8 percent in the same time frame.

"The nematode is the main reason soybean yields have been flat," Terpstra said. "Cyst Tech can be the big breakthrough."

The seed industry has battled the parasite in the usual way, with genetically modified seeds designed to resist the parasites. As has happened in the age of genetic engineering, the nematodes gradually evolve to overcome the biotech resistances.

Terpstra said his Cyst Tech seeds can be planted year after year, without rotation, and their interaction with the soil cause yields to rise over time.

One of Mark Seeds' customers, Albert Evans of Jacksonville, Ill., has become a believer and is "tickled to death" with Terpstra's Cyst

hotel designed
by Frank Lloyd
Wright

MOST COMMENTED

- Paul's policies evoke thoughts of Somalia20
- New health law beats alternative9
- Third of Iowa schools missed achievement targets7
- Children born on 9/11 represent this country's light7
- With homeland security funding dropping, will Iowa be more at risk — or better off?6



Learn Secrets Your Auto Insurance Company Doesn't Want You to Know

More »



New Breakthrough Puts an End to Snoring and Lets You Sleep Through the Night

More »



Secrets to Loosing up to 13 Inches in 60 Minutes or Less- Naturally

More »

advertorials by WHY YOU NEED TO KNOW.COM
ADVERTISEMENT

ADS BY PULSE 360

AdChoices

Minneapolis: Dermatologists Hate Her

Local Mom Exposes an Anti-Aging Miracle. Her \$5 Trick ERASES Wrinkles!
ConsumerProductsDigest.com

Free Credit Score From All 3 Bureaus

View your latest Credit Scores from All 3 Bureaus in 60 seconds for \$0
FreeScoreOnline.com

Learn Six Sigma Online

Earn Online the Six Sigma Credentials That Could Set You Apart
www.VillanovaU.com/SixSigma

Tech beans.

Evans, a four-decade veteran of farming in central Illinois, got 80 bushels per acre last year from his Cyst Tech soybeans and expects the same yield this year.

"I started five years ago and didn't see much difference," said Evans, who said yields in his area average around 60 bushels per acre.

"But the second year I had 10 extra bushels in the yield and the next year another 10," Evans said.

"I think that within three years I can get 100 bushels to the acre."

In Iowa, Al and Kym Hemerson of Gilmore City said they saw their yields almost double to 48 bushels per acre the first year they used Cyst Tech.

This year, the Hemerson's early harvest soybean yield was in the 56 to 58 bushel per acre range.

"This business is all about yield," Terpstra said.

The fate of a tiny company like Terpstra's in a sea with large companies like Monsanto and Pioneer Hi-Bred is uncertain.

Like other independents, Mark Seeds has existed by being a licensee of technologies from the bigger companies.

With Cyst Tech, Mark Seeds has become a licensor. Terpstra said he has a licensing agreement for Cyst Tech with the Growmark network of cooperatives and its FS Seeds.

"We're out there now and everybody knows what we have," Terpstra said. "We'll wait for the licensing business to come to us."

Terpstra was literally borne to the seed business. His father, Arnold Terpstra, ran the old Lynnvile Riverside Seed company.

When Lynnvile Riverside was sold to Mycogen, the younger Terpstra, who had graduated from Drake University in 1979 with a pre-med degree, stayed on for a while to run the operation for Mycogen in eastern Iowa and Illinois.

"I had been breeding plants in my dad's lab since I was 12," Terpstra said. "So, it was natural for me to stay in the business."

Terpstra relocated from Lynnvile to Perry in 1985 and organized Mark Seeds, where it has remained.

Like others in the seed business, Terpstra has recoiled from the bitter battle that has broken out between Monsanto and Pioneer Hi-Bred.

The two companies have traded patent infringement and antitrust lawsuits and their squabble has drawn the attention of the Department of Agriculture and the Justice Department, which early next year will begin an investigation of the industry.

Terpstra is just hoping he doesn't suffer collateral damage.

"We're just keeping our heads down while the shrapnel is flying overhead," he said.

View Comments (6) | Share your thoughts »

TOP VIDEO PICKS
selected by Taboola

Iowa Corn Cy-Hawk
Trophy press conference
Aug 23, 2011

Rick Santorum at The
Des Moines Register s...
Aug 12, 2011

Thaddeus McCotter at
The Des Moines Regist...
Aug 12, 2011

YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN

- Wells Fargo shows its true colors to customers (DesMoinesRegister.com)
- Munson: With post office's closure, Searsboro surrenders (DesMoinesRegister.com)
- Iowa State football: Defensive line adds bulk (DesMoinesRegister.com)
- Strategic plan for Des Moines has 'core city' as focus (DesMoinesRegister.com)
- Two for \$20: Capital Pub & Hot Dog Co. (DesMoinesRegister.com)

SPONSORED LINKS

- Refinancing Tips and Advice: Things to Be Aware Of (Can Do Finance)
- These 4 Things Happen Right Before A Heart Attack (Newsmax.com)
- \$1.2 million mansion for \$10K? (BankRate.com)
- Redrow calls for return of 95% loans (Financial Times)
- How to Withdraw Money Without an ATM Card (eHow)

[?]

10 Stocks to Hold Forever
Buy them, forget about them, and never sell them.
www.StreetAuthority.com

ARCHIVES






View the last 30 days

- Yesterday, Sep. 08
- Wednesday, Sep. 07
- Tuesday, Sep. 06
- Monday, Sep. 05
- Sunday, Sep. 04
- Saturday, Sep. 03
- Friday, Sep. 02

See our paid archives for news older than a week.

ADVERTISEMENT

PROMOTIONS



CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Place an ad

Submit a milestone

View milestones

Work for us

Feedback/news tips

Newspapers in Education
- Subscribe Today!

Sign up for EZPay

Manage Account

Delivery problem

Pay your bill

Site Map | Back to Top

NEWS

- Politics
- Crime & Courts
- 2012 Iowa Caucuses
- Education
- State & Local Government
- Kyle Munson
- Nation & World
- Weather
- Archive
- Watchdog

LIFE

- MomsLikeMe
- Homestyle
- Juice
- Des Moines Woman
- fiftysomething
- Q magazine
- Dating
- Milestones

SPORTS

- HawkCentral
- Cyclone Insider
- High School Insider
- Drake Bulldogs
- UNI Panthers
- National Sports
- Marc Hansen
- History
- Photos

OPINION

- Editorials
- Rekha Basu
- Kathie Obradovich
- Guest Essays
- Letters to the Editor
- Your 2 Cents' Worth
- Blogs
- Forums

BUSINESS

- Agriculture
- Central Iowa Networking
- Green Fields
- Biz Buzz
- Finance & Insurance
- New in the Neighborhood
- Get to Know
- David Elbert

COMMUNITIES

- Ankeny
- Clive
- D.M. East & North
- D.M. South
- D.M. West
- Johnston
- Urbandale
- Waukee
- West Des Moines

ENTERTAINMENT

- Metromix
- Restaurant Guide
- Datebook
- Events
- Dining
- Music
- Arts
- Movies
- TV Listings
- Comics

OBITUARIES

- Submit an obituary
- Submit a memorial

HELP

- Subscriber Solutions
- Advertising Solutions
- Reader Solutions
- About Des Moines Register
- Media
- Contact us

FOLLOW US

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Mobile
- RSS
- E-mail Alerts
- Text Alerts

News | Jobs | Cars for Sale | Homes for Sale | Apartments for Rent | Real Estate | Shopping | Mom Groups

GANNETT

Copyright © 2011 www.DesMoinesRegister.com. All rights reserved.
Users of this site agree to the [Terms of Service](#), [Privacy Notice/Your California Privacy Rights](#), and [Ad Choices](#)

ADVERTISEMENT