

Syngenta Reflects On Legacy Of Garst® Seed Brand

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High-yielding hybrids, innovative corn technologies and an entrepreneurial approach to growing corn are among the attributes corn growers throughout the Corn Belt likely associate with the Garst® seed brand. They may also fondly recall the “Garst Guy” and “Garst Gal” on the radio, print advertisements proclaiming “it’s gotta be Garst” and the royal blue lettering on plot signs and seed bags. While the 2014 season will see the Syngenta-owned Garst and Golden Harvest® brands launched under the revised Golden Harvest brand, Syngenta will retain its commitment to upholding the quality, reliability and legacy that have become synonymous with the Garst brand and the Garst Seed Advisor.

The contributions of the Garst brand extend well beyond high-quality hybrids and memorable marketing campaigns; the Garst tradition of selling seed is reflected in the function of the Syngenta Seed Advisor – to provide local agronomic expertise and customized planting recommendations to each customer. When founder Roswell Garst began promoting hybrid corn seed in 1927, he traveled from farm to farm, sharing his agricultural knowledge with customers and explaining how his hybrid seed would perform in the fields. By doing so, he established the original farmer-dealer network. Like the Colonel of KFC and Wendy’s Dave Thomas of fast food fame, Roswell Garst was a dynamic and recognizable face in the agricultural community.

“Roswell Garst’s commitment to customers – to be a trusted advisor in addition to a seed dealer, is the very essence of what the Syngenta Seed Advisor network embodies,” said Lori Thomas, customer marketing manager for the dealer channel commercial unit for Syngenta in North America. “Even though the Garst name won’t have the same market presence, the integrity, tradition and history of the company will continue to live on.” Thomas and her husband, Mike, were Garst Seed Advisors for 10 years.

Founded as Garst & Thomas Hi-Bred Corn Company in 1930, the Garst brand grew over the years through a series of mergers and acquisitions. The brand has a rich history of bringing many innovative corn solutions to market; it led the way in developing herbicide-tolerant hybrids, including the first IMI-corn. It also was among the first seed companies to offer European Corn Borer (Bt) control and herbicide tolerance together in one corn hybrid.

Roswell Garst’s passion for helping farmers grow more corn transcended borders as he introduced hybrid corn abroad and advocated for the adoption of modern farming methods – for the purpose of growing more from less. In many respects, he was an agricultural ambassador ahead of his time.

One of Roswell Garst’s most notable friendships was with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, a strong proponent of corn cultivation in the Soviet Union. Garst made several trips to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe during the 1950s and 1960s – at the height of

the Cold War – to promote progressive methods of corn production in Europe. Khrushchev notably visited the Garst family farm during a visit to the United States – the first such visit in the history of Soviet-American relations – in 1959. After Roswell Garst’s death in 1977, his sons, Stephen and David Garst, continued to operate the company.

Syngenta acquired the Garst brand in 2004 – bringing the synergies of a global agribusiness to the Coon Rapids, Iowa-based company. Since then, Syngenta has focused on building a diverse genetic portfolio, using the genetics from the Garst, Golden Harvest and NK® brand breeding programs and incorporating the market-leading line-up of Agrisure® traits.

David Witherspoon, head of renewable fuels for Syngenta and the former president of Garst Seed, looks back on the Garst acquisition as a milestone in the Garst legacy and a step in the right direction for the Syngenta seeds business. “When Garst became part of the Syngenta family, the brand’s research budget increased dramatically and enabled Garst to make advancements that otherwise wouldn’t have been possible,” he said.

As announced by Syngenta on March 12, the decision to rebrand the existing Garst and Golden Harvest corn seed brands and launch a unified Golden Harvest brand stemmed from ongoing efforts to strengthen and grow the network of Syngenta Seed Advisors. Previously, the Seed Advisor network was segmented to support the two brands. Golden Harvest seed is available through the dealer channel; retailers market and sell Syngenta corn seed under the NK brand. A new logo and numbering system for Golden Harvest hybrids will be in place for summer 2013 trials and the 2014 planting season. In keeping with the legacy of excellence the Garst brand established, elements of the former Garst numbering system will be brought forth for existing hybrids in the new system, while also aligning with many of the newer Golden Harvest hybrids.

“As a company, we continuously evaluate ways in which we can better serve our customers,” said Colin Steen, head of the dealer channel commercial unit for Syngenta in North America. “Unifying our Syngenta Seed Advisor network to support one corn brand was an important step as we continue to grow and provide unparalleled customer service.” Supporting a single corn brand in the dealer channel will streamline logistics – from packaging and ordering seed to inventory and delivery, translating to improved efficiencies in how growers access the products they want.

Growers who have counted on Garst seed to maximize their yields will still have access to the same high-quality genetics under the Golden Harvest name through their Syngenta Seed Advisor.

For more information about corn seed from Syngenta, visit www.SyngentaSeeds.com. Follow Syngenta on Twitter (@SyngentaUS) and Facebook ([Facebook.com/FarmAssist](https://www.facebook.com/FarmAssist)). Δ



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