

Did the Washington Post ‘overstate’ ‘marker-assisted’ breeding method?

A recent *Washington Post* article by Adrian Higgins, titled, “[Trait by trait, plant scientists swiftly weed out bad seeds through marker-assisted breeding](#)” (April 16, 2014) overstates the potential of marker-assisted selection (a molecular plant breeding method) and makes the dubious claim that it’s the most promising plant breeding method available today.

We agree that marker-assisted selection (MAS) has a role in crop improvement and has helped breeders for a quarter century understand the relationship between genes and plant traits. It is good basic research. But MAS is just one tool in a plant breeder’s toolbox, with clear limitations, which the article largely dismissed.

If the past century of agriculture has taught us anything, it’s that there are no silver-bullet solutions to complex problems, MAS included. The danger with this centralized, one-size-fits-all breeding approach is that it results in diminishing crop diversity, as well as the diversity of breeders representing different interests in creatively solving agricultural challenges at the regional level.

Read the full, original article: Washington Post misses the mark on molecular breeding story