Biotech startup Indigo Ag aims to upend agriculture with microbiology

[David Perry, CEO of Indigo Ag, an agricultural-technology startup headquartered in Boston] sees an opportunity for Indigo Ag to lead or catalyze a change in the way industrialized agriculture is done.
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Indigo Ag was founded to capitalize on the mutualisms among plants and their endophytic, in-plant microbial partners.

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Their first product, Indigo Cotton™ (cotton seeds coated with their proprietary mix of microbes) was launched in the spring of 2016 in West Texas, and led to an 11 percent improvement in yield by protecting against drought stress.

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Perry defines Indigo Ag's place in the big picture thus: "We need about 70 percent more food than we currently produce—or rather than we deliver—to feed 10 billion people. Some of that can be managed through reducing waste and changing eating habits, but we have got to produce a lot more—let's says 50 percent more." As much as half of that additional production, he believes, will come from microbiology. Furthermore, he adds, "I think ultimately we have the opportunity to replace at least half of the chemical fertilizer used and maybe 90 percent of the chemical insecticides and fungicides."

As for the remainder of the projected yield shortfall, Perry suggests that 20 to 30 percent is likely to come from genetic enhancements of staple crops, and the final 20 or 30 percent from "digital ag."

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