

Viewpoint: How GMO herbicide-tolerant canola accelerated sustainable farming

Who would have fathomed how significant a day in March 1995 would become in the history of Canadian agriculture? On March 14th, 1995, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) approved the two genetically modified (GM), herbicide tolerant varieties of canola for commercial production. These were the first GM crops to be approved for production and consumption in Canada.

AgrEvo Canada Inc. had a glufosinate ammonium tolerant variety of canola approved, while Monsanto Canada's approved canola was glyphosate tolerant. Now, 25 years later, the impact of these two crop approval decisions, is nothing short of phenomenal. The beneficial impacts of GM crops on yield, chemical use and sustainability have completely transformed Prairie agriculture over this period.

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Quite possibly the most significant benefit of GM canola can be observed by driving down virtually any country road in Western Canada on a windy summer day. Driving down this road 30 years ago, one would have experienced dust constantly blowing across the road due to the presence of summerfallow fields. Today, dust blowing across rural roads is virtually a thing of the past as GM canola has precipitated the move to zero tillage land management practices.

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