

With consumers still fearful of synthetic chemicals, biotech firms spend billions on biopesticide development

Major players like Bayer and start-up companies are spending billions to identify fungi, bacteria and organic compounds in plants that can control the pests (weeds, insects and diseases) that plague producers of wheat, canola, potatoes, apples and other crops.

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“The global biopesticides market size was valued at US\$3.36 billion in 2017 (and) is projected to reach \$10.19 billion by the end of 2025, exhibiting a (growth rate) of 14.93 percent during the forecast period,” said Fortune Business Insights, in a 2019 report.

Despite such rosy forecasts, many questions surround biopesticides. Can they perform on big acreage farms? Will they be effective in harsh climates like Western Canada?

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Over the next 10 years or so, bio-pesticides will be used in tandem with synthetic pesticides and could replace them for certain situations In the longer term, 15-20 years from now, a lot depends on public sentiment.

If consumer hostility ramps up and there are more legal threats to chemical pesticides, bio-pesticides could supplant synthetics.

“If you think of Syngenta and Bayer, both those organizations are investing billions into natural (and) bio-pesticides,” [said Colin Bletskey, chief operating officer of MustGrow Biologics Corp.] “Over the long-term, you are going to see new things (products) and that cost come down.”

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