Reshuffling the deck: How agro-chemical suppliers are repositioning weed-killing products

There is a new king of soybeans on the American farm—for now.

For years, one company dominated the roughly 80 million acres of soybeans planted in the U.S. after Missouri-based Monsanto revolutionized farming with seeds genetically engineered to tolerate the weedkiller Roundup. Bayer, the German agriculture and pharmaceutical company, became the top crop-seed maker after its 2018 acquisition of Monsanto.

A rival agriculture company, Corteva, has been flexing its muscles since it was spun out of DowDuPont in 2019. It has pulled ahead with new biotech soybeans that the company says now make up more than half the market.

Together, Bayer and Corteva sell roughly 70% of all corn and soybean seeds planted in the U.S., up from about 40% two decades ago, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The companies are in hot competition for the billions of dollars that farmers spend each year on seed-and-chemical combinations designed to combat hard-to-kill weeds.

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Bayer said the soybean race isn’t over, and that it is investing heavily in creating new technologies that will help it regain lost soybean share. It aims to launch a biotech soybean, HT4, in 2027. The soybean will be able to withstand five different weed-killing chemicals, the first soybean ever to do so, Bayer said.

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