

Syngenta uniquely placed to deliver varieties well suited to Australian market

Vegetables
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It's often said that the United States offers a crystal ball when it comes to the kind of varieties that could make their way down under in seasons to come.

The adoption of new watermelon, zucchini and sweet corn varieties here comes as no accident, as the Australian and US arms of Syngenta work closely on the development of varieties that suit both local growing conditions and market demands.

“With respect to our New Product Introductions (NPI’s) we have the benefit of a close relationship with the US,” said Syngenta Product Development Specialist – Cucurbits and LSV, Leith Plevey.

“Australian growers can have a lot of confidence in the varieties we bring here, even in the early stages of introduction, as we’re able to build on those US experiences in trial work here.”

Leith said the Syngenta Global Centre for Cucurbits Excellence in Woodland, California, was home to leading watermelon, rockmelon and zucchini breeders, working on new material to trial over the coming seasons.

“While the Woodland and Davis areas east of San Francisco are well tenanted by global seeds companies, few compare Syngenta and the scale of our investment in recent years,” he said

“With over 100 hectares of farmland available, as well a first-class laboratory and seed processing facilities, our customers benefit from being aligned with one of the few seed companies still actively investing in breeding seedless watermelon and rockmelon specifically for the Australian market.

“Without this Australian focus we would not have access to the varieties needed to meet local requirements, such an olive-green rind in seedless watermelon, and cool-season rockmelons for the northern winter window.”



Leith said the US business is trialing some exciting new watermelon and rockmelon material. This includes new seedless watermelon varieties to complement the Syngenta ANZ portfolio.

“There’s going to be some really interesting developments in rockmelon too, which we will be able to share soon, that are sure to grab some attention as we start to introduce trials into Australia,” he said.

“Some of these we have just started to trial and we’ll continue to build on over summer.

“Our zucchini breeder has also done some great work to validate new industry-leading levels of virus resistance, which will certainly be valued by our growers here.”



In terms of corn there's no bigger market in the world than the US. Syngenta's primary breeding facility for Processing Sweetcorn, and the North American Syngenta Seedcare Institute, are in Stanton, Minnesota, deep in the US corn belt. Additionally, there's a second trial site located just to the east in Wisconsin.

Sharing some insights from a recent visit to these facilities, Leith said there was much for the Australian market to look forward to.



“Together these two states produce the majority of the US’s processed (frozen and canned) sweetcorn and green beans, so the focus of this visit was to see new processing material and build experience with some of the NPI’s planned for the next twelve months,” he said.

“The variety GSS3951 has rapidly ascended to become one of the top processing variety in the US, alongside Syngenta’s OVERLAND, in just two seasons, and is planned for launch in ANZ in 2019.”

With Leith working as closely as he does with the US business, his insights are often sought after.

“Many of our local customers like to travel to the US themselves, and we’re always happy to host or arrange visits to share that learning process,” he said.