

Ensuring food security with the help of genetics

By Jacques Bredell, seed specialist, IntelliSeed

Genetics is the study of the genes of an organism and deals with the inheritance of characters. Farmers face many challenges with food production, and we need to assist them with the best products available.

A broader view of genetics

One of the ways to mitigate challenges is the use of specific crop varieties selected for their desired traits (genes). In the past, this was done through traditional breeding/selecting. However, our knowledge of what the different types of genes are and their function within living organisms, has greatly increased.

Through the use of improved scientific methods, technologies, and breeding programmes, we have started to develop processes to catalogue each gene and its functions. This allows us to speed up the selecting and breeding process. Genetics and gene selection has always been a part of our food and farming history since we first decided to put down roots and establish a community.

The true value in breeding has to do with the ability of such selections to have resistance and tolerance to the various diseases, pests, and climate challenges, such as droughts or extremely cold temperatures. These traits are especially important to our farmers as they will

allow them to do faster crop rotation, decrease the use of harsh chemicals, and most importantly, they will be able to cultivate varieties outside their normal environment or growth cycle.

This will allow for year-round production of crops, as well as being able to bring the production of essential crops closer to areas where there is irregular supply of nutritional foods, therefore contributing to food security for the future.

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