

SECTION 2
THE FUTURE

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Monsanto commits to double yield in major crops

What does sustainability mean for agriculture? Common use of the term “sustainability” began with the report entitled *Our Common Future*, published in 1987 by the World Commission on the Environment and Development. It suggested that sustainable development is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

In seven out of the past eight years, the world has consumed more grain than it produced, reducing inventories to historic lows and leading to significant food price inflation for the first time in decades.

What do these challenges mean for agriculture and what does agriculture offer those who care about sustainability? Over the past year, the senior leadership of Monsanto Company has increasingly discussed this question with farmers, policymakers, scientists, NGOs, and experts from academia and industry. What follows is what we have learned, thus far.

Outlook for population and food

According to the US Census Bureau, global population will reach 8.9 billion by 2040 and 9.4 billion by 2050 before stabilising around 9.7 billion later in the century. Implied in this estimate is a 34 per cent increase by 2040 over today’s global population estimate of 6.6 billion, and a 42 per cent increase by 2050.

According to Dr Bob Thompson, agricultural policy expert with the University of Illinois, as incomes



Hugh Grant, chairman, president and chief executive officer of Monsanto.

rise to the level of \$2 to \$10 per day, people eat more meat, dairy, fruits, vegetables, and edible oils — creating rapid demand growth for agricultural commodities. Even today, nearly three billion people live on less than \$2 per day including 46 per cent of the Chinese population, and similarly large populations in countries like India and Indonesia. Taken together, population growth and rising incomes are expected to double the quantity of food demanded by 2050.

Commitment to increase food production

In June this year Monsanto announced a three-point commitment to help increase global food production in the face of growing demand, limited natural resources and a changing climate.

Monsanto committed to work in new partnerships with other businesses, citizen groups and governments to meet one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century.

“Agriculture intersects the toughest challenges we all face on the planet,” said Hugh Grant, chairman, president and chief executive officer of Monsanto, in announcing the commitment to help address the needs of a global population expected to reach nine billion people by 2050.

“Together, we must meet the needs for increased food, fibre and energy while protecting the environment. In short, the world needs to produce more while conserving more.

“As an agricultural company focused on increasing crop yields, we will do our part,” he said. “But it will also require the efforts of a diverse group of organisations with many

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<28...COMMITTED TO DOUBLE YIELD

points of view to work together and take action to address the daunting challenges facing us all.”

Monsanto’s three-point commitment to growing yields sustainably includes:

Develop better seeds

Monsanto will double yield in its three core crops of corn, soybeans and cotton by 2030, compared to a base year of 2000.

Monsanto’s research program centers on increasing yields for these three key crops used for food, feed, fibre and fuel. The company’s research pipeline uses more precise breeding techniques to develop higher-yielding germplasm.

Monsanto will also establish a five-year, \$10 million grant for rice and wheat research to be administered by a panel of world experts on food production in developing countries. Rice and wheat are key crops for food security, but are not a primary focus for the company. A panel of independent judges will select one project per year to receive a \$2 million grant.

Conserve resources

Monsanto will develop seeds that will reduce by one-third the amount of key resources required to grow crops by the year 2030. The company will also join with others to address habitat loss and water quality in agriculturally important areas.

Monsanto’s research pipeline includes new corn, soybeans and cotton products that will result in more

production per unit of land, and reduced use of energy, fertiliser and water per unit produced. Monsanto will track the progress of its products toward the goal of reducing by one-third the cumulative amount of these key resource required per unit of output.

Help improve farmers’ lives

Monsanto will help improve the lives of farmers, including an additional five million people in resource-poor farm families by 2020.

“We’re undertaking this initiative after engaging many of our farmer customers, policymakers, scientists, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and experts in academia and industry. We asked them what agriculture must do to become more sustainable, and our commitment reflects how we will put their advice into action,” Hugh said.

He said that Monsanto spends an average of more than \$2 million a day on agricultural research. Yet he noted that partnerships with others are essential to developing and delivering approaches to these global challenges.

“The quality of life for the world’s one billion farmers is an important part of this equation. This includes both commercial farmers and the tens of millions of resource-poor farmers who survive on less than \$2 per day.

“Part of this commitment is offering products that increase productivity and reduce the risks of farming, such as fewer inputs to manage insects, weeds and other yield-robbing stresses.”

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