



A REWARDING VENTURE:

A VIETNAMESE FARMER MAKES IT BIG WITH GM MAIZE

In 2018, Vietnamese farmer, Vu Van Quan, made the decision to shift from the conventional variety to planting genetically modified (GM) maize. This proved to be the right call as he shares the story of his successful venture.



Photo Credit: CropLife Vietnam

LIFE-CHANGING INVESTMENT

Like most farmers in Thanh Hoa province, Northern Vietnam, Quan's primary source of livelihood is planting sugarcane and maize. When a dairy factory introduced GM maize in their area in 2018, he took the plunge and began planting the GM crop. A year after he learned about GM maize, Quan had already planted the crop on four hectares of farmland. Today, all his produce (biomass) is being purchased by the local dairy company.

In terms of yield, GM maize has a biomass of 50-54 tons per hectare, with an average selling price of USD 59.7 per ton. If everything goes well during a planting season, farmers can harvest up to 60 tons per hectare, higher than conventional maize which has an average yield of 45 tons per hectare. "With two cropping seasons per year, we can earn more than USD 2,000 per hectare, twice as high compared to growing sugarcane or traditional maize varieties," he shares.

Quan further explains that since GM maize has a shorter growing period (about 110 to 120 days), he

can now plant up to three cropping seasons per year especially when the weather is favorable. It also does not take much effort to grow GM Maize, according to Quan. "I can now manage my corn field on my own unlike before where I had to hire extra set of hands for weeding," he recalls. To ensure that his crops are in excellent condition, he has also invested in modern farming tools such as sprinklers and water-saving irrigation systems.

Along with increased income and yield, Quan notes that GM maize is safer than the conventional varieties when it comes to pesticide use. "There is no need to use insecticides. I only spray the crops with herbicide, reducing the amount of residual chemicals in the soil and protecting the environment," he adds. The cows in the local dairy company where he sells his produce are also healthy, proving that GM maize used for animal feed is as safe as the traditional variety.

THRIVING WITH GM MAIZE

More importantly, Quan has been able provide a better life for his family with the profits he gained from planting GM Maize. "We now have enough money to repair the house and buy a motorbike. I can send my children to a good school, and I have also invested in machinery for agricultural production and planting fruit trees around the house. Truly, GM Maize has more advantages than the conventional maize varieties," he beams.

Quan acknowledges that the country's GM maize industry still faces some constraints even though farmers like him have found success in the biotech crop. "GM maize is unpopular with some farmers in my community since they will only plant it if they are linked with a company or if they have buyers," he reveals. Another challenge is the high cost of irrigation for the corn field. GM maize requires daily irrigation, and not all farmers have the means to invest in an irrigation system for their farm. Quan also mentioned that though there are many varieties of GM maize that farmers can choose from, there is no herbicide available for GM maize in the country (Glyphosate, a herbicide specifically for GM maize, is banned in Vietnam).

Still, Quan believes that he has made a profitable investment when he shifted to GM maize. He also encourages fellow farmers to see the benefits for themselves. "I advise other farmers to explore their options before planting GM maize, then select the maize varieties that are most suitable for local conditions. Personally, I have enjoyed the benefits of planting it, and I want them to experience it as well," he states.



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