

CAMA'S AGRI-MARKETER OF THE YEAR

by Linda Parry, Bark Communications

Stephen Denys is passionately dedicated to the industry of agriculture.

Whether in his position at **PRIDE Seeds**, his membership and time leading the board of the **Canadian Seed Trade Association**, or as a farmer, Denys always takes the time and opportunity to promote the needs and rights of farmers and the importance of agriculture.



Stephen Denys

Raised on a cash crop and vegetable farm that he manages today, Denys brings an experienced voice to the table, allowing him to effectively articulate messages growers understand and respond to.

Denys career path has given him a broad experience base, all of which led to his current position. A graduate of the **University of Guelph**, Denys first took a full-time role at **United Agri Products** in the area of product development. This opened an opportunity in 1990 to become Southwestern Ontario Territory manager for **Hoechst Canada** (present day **Bayer CropScience**), working in the herbicide and insecticide markets for fruits, vegetables, and cash crops.

Wanting to learn about the fungicide business and expand his management role, he moved to **ISK Biosciences** where he oversaw sales and marketing in Ontario with marketing responsibilities for Canada, covering horticulture, field crops, and the turf market.

With that well-rounded experience in the crop protection industry and background in field crops, together with a freshly minted masters in business administration, Denys sought a new challenge.

In 1997 he joined **Bridge Communications**, a full-service advertising firm with a large portfolio of agricultural clients. This position provided him the opportunity to put his experience and education into marketing strategy for agricultural clients across North America, focusing on brand and product positioning along with market strategy development.

Combining his success in strategic marketing with his personal farm responsibilities, Denys was sought for his next challenge, the rejuvenation of a storied brand based in his home community of Chatham-Kent, Ontario. In 2003, he joined the team at **PRIDE Seeds** in his current position of vice president of sales and marketing.

At **PRIDE Seeds**, Denys oversees the development and implementation of production, sales and marketing

strategies, he also works tirelessly with his team to position **PRIDE Seeds** products with his team with their customers.

But that has only been part of his story.

Since the early nineties, Denys has been an advocate for the benefits of modern agriculture expressed through his involvement in trade associations such as a **CropLife Canada** and the **Canadian Seed Trade Association**.

He has focused significant time and energy on educating rural and urban groups on the importance of maintaining access and continuing to develop modern crop production tools including crop protection products and traits technologies. Even with one of the world's most stringent regulatory systems in Canada, farm access to modern agricultural tools continues to be threatened by well-intentioned people who, for the most part, have turned their backs to science.

Beyond his commitment to his family, the fight to educate and inform on the importance of modern agriculture has in many ways become his mantra.

Over the past two plus years, neonicotinoid insecticides and bee health have been the focus of mainstream media across the country. On that, and other issues, Denys has been called upon to be one of the faces of Canadian agriculture to not only defend, but educate, our regulators and the public on the facts to defend the advancements that have been made.

Denys has made countless presentations to high schools, universities, and service groups such as the rotary clubs, government, and industry organizations where he has spoken on the critical importance and safety of modern agricultural production systems, the challenge of feeding the world, and identifying the importance of agriculture with students and the employment opportunities to consider.

As the 2012-2013 **Canadian Seed Trade Association** President, Denys assumed a mandate that included ensuring Canadian producers would have access to the best seed genetics and seed technologies possible.

His efforts on the board advanced updated plant breeders rights, the development of co-existence planning for the introduction of new traits and the development of communications strategies for stakeholders in the seed industry.

His passion has previously been recognized by the **Agriculture Institute of Canada** as Young Agrologist of the Year, and by his home community where he was named **Agriculturist of the Year** in 2013.

Stephen Denys, a proud, passionate and dedicated voice for the present and future of agriculture in Canada. **AM**