

F-05

Specialty soybeans: how organic, non-GMO and identity preserved varieties meet the needs of a growing marketplace

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Each year, an estimated 15 million metric tons of soybeans are processed directly into a variety of food products including traditional soyfoods and soy ingredients. Due to desired results in terms of cost per unit, yield and product quality, most soyfood processors will specify soybean quality attributes such as seed size, color and protein content. In addition, due to growing consumer demand for more natural, 'clean label' food products, many processors are requiring non-GMO or organic certification.

These demands have created a growing market for identity preserved, or IP soybeans. In order for IP soybeans to maintain their identity and value, there are numerous requirements regarding production, harvest, handling, storage and transportation that add to the complexity and costs of delivering these higher value soybeans to the market. In addition, there are new varieties of GMO soybeans that carry improved oil traits, such as hi-oleic, that may make soybean oil more attractive to end-users.

The combined market for food-grade IP and specialty oil trait soybeans may likely reach 25 to 30% of the U.S. soybean market within the next five years triggering a need for improved infrastructure that can maintain quality and traceability of these IP varieties.

This is likely to stimulate new investments in grain facilities and related logistics.