

# BASF Execs Go Front and Center to Discuss Future of Chemicals

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

**H**ans W. Reiners made no apology for the word “chemical” being used in the tagline of his company’s name. Reiners is one of the top brass for one of the industry’s largest pesticide producers — BASF: The Chemical Company.

“Chemical” may not be the prettiest word these days to describe pesticides, but Reiners could not care less.

“Let’s face it: We’re a chemical company,” said Reiners, president of the BASF Group’s Agricultural Products Division. “If nobody stands up for it ... well, we shouldn’t be surprised if people say we don’t need chemicals anymore.”

Reiners spoke to members of the turf and agriculture trade press at a media

event held in April at the North American headquarters of BASF Agricultural Products in Research Triangle Park, N.C. Attendees also listened to presentations by Bill Wisdom, group vice president of Agricultural Products in North America; and Markus Heldt, senior vice president of the Agricultural Products Division in Latin America. In addition, attendees toured the company’s 72,000 square-foot lab facility.

In his presentation, “Agricultural Products Strategy Confirms Technology Leadership,” Reiners, who’s based in Limburgerhof, Germany, talked extensively about the company’s focus on research and development. While Reiners said he expects the herbi-

cide market to decline by 1 percent to 2 percent annually in coming years, he said that doesn’t mean new herbicides aren’t required.

“We know there are some voices saying that, in

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the field of herbicides, all problems are solved and there is no need for new technology,” Reiners said. “We do not believe that this is fully true. Therefore we watch the situation very carefully. We think the time will come when, in some markets, innovative solutions will be highly appreciated.”

Globally, there are greater growth opportunities in fungicides and insecticides, Reiners noted.

“In the insecticide market, modern higher quality chemical products are increasingly going to replace traditional active ingredients,” he said. “Based on

this necessity for new products, which is driven by potential persistency and regulatory pressure, insecticides will grow by some 2 percent per year.”

Reiners said the same growth is true for fungicides. “Here we see a high and continuing demand for innovation resulting in a mid-term annual market growth for an estimated 3 percent.”

Reiners said BASF is working on developing six active ingredients as well as a herbicide-tolerance project and numerous products to protect seeds with active ingredients that have already been launched.

Wisdom talked about BASF’s improved effort to focus on its customers. Part of being customer-focused, he noted, is having a correct “innovation ratio” when it comes to a company’s product-in-the-pipeline strategy. The optimal technology model would be a company that has 50 percent of its efforts in new technology and 50 percent of its efforts in established technology.

Wisdom stressed his belief that innovative products will be based on genetic traits in the future, defined as 2015 and beyond.

“I may be retired by then, but we believe in them,” he concluded.

