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Syngenta strengthens vegetable seed pipeline with focus on Fusarium resistance

20 July 2026 | News

Company highlights breeding innovations across watermelon, tomato and lettuce to help farmers safeguard yields against one of agriculture's most persistent soil-borne diseases

As vegetable growers grapple with increasing disease pressure and rising production costs, Syngenta Vegetable Seeds is strengthening its portfolio of Fusarium-resistant varieties, positioning genetic resistance as one of the most effective long-term strategies against one of agriculture's most destructive soil-borne diseases. Fusarium wilt continues to threaten commercial vegetable production worldwide, affecting crops grown in open fields, protected cultivation systems and greenhouses. Once established, the fungal pathogen invades a plant's vascular system, disrupting water and nutrient movement, leading to wilting, yellowing, stunted growth and, ultimately, plant death.

Unlike many crop diseases, Fusarium presents a long-term challenge because the pathogen can survive in soil for years—even in the absence of host crops—making prevention more effective than treatment.

Resistance becomes the first line of defence

While crop rotation, sanitation and nematode management remain important components of integrated disease management, Syngenta says resistant genetics offer growers one of the most reliable tools for reducing yield losses. "There is no cure once Fusarium infects a plant, making prevention the most effective strategy," the company noted, emphasizing that resistant varieties help growers minimise disease pressure while maintaining productivity.

According to Thomas Dumont, Lettuce Product Specialist Manager at Syngenta Vegetable Seeds, breeding programmes are increasingly focused on combining strong agronomic performance with durable disease resistance. "The main goal for us is to provide the largest genetic chassis and the best resistance traits within our pipeline and our varieties," Dumont said.

Innovation across key vegetable crops

Syngenta continues to incorporate Fusarium resistance across several commercially important vegetable crops. In watermelon, breeding programmes target resistance to Fusarium wilt Race 1, one of the most economically significant diseases affecting production. The company says improved resistance helps maintain plant health and supports higher yield potential. For tomato growers, Fusarium-resistant rootstocks have become an important component of yield protection strategies, particularly in intensive production systems where soil-borne diseases can persist across multiple growing seasons.

In lettuce, although downy mildew remains the dominant disease concern in many regions, Fusarium wilt has emerged as an increasing challenge, prompting continued investment in resistant breeding lines.

Early detection remains critical

Alongside resistant varieties, Syngenta encourages growers to maintain regular field scouting, particularly during hot weather when Fusarium symptoms become more visible. Early warning signs include yellowing leaves, one-sided wilting and vascular browning inside the stem. Removing infected plants promptly and confirming diagnosis through plant pathology testing can help limit disease spread and improve long-term field management.

Meeting future production challenges
As climate variability, continuous cropping and soil health challenges increase disease pressure across vegetable production systems, seed companies are placing greater emphasis on genetics as a sustainable solution. For Syngenta, continued investment in resistance breeding reflects a broader industry shift towards integrated crop protection strategies that combine genetics, agronomy and precision crop management to improve resilience while reducing dependence on chemical interventions.