

2025 WINTER CONFERENCE SPEAKER PROFILE MIKE PARKINSON

Are You Asking Your Seed Dealer These 5 Key Questions?

Farmers who ask better questions get better answers. These answers are more important than ever as margins tighten and the temptation grows to cut corners with inputs, including seed.

“Don’t be surprised if you start seeing really cheap seed from some suppliers,” said Mike Parkinson, a key account manager with Legend Seeds. “You need to ‘audit’ the seed companies you work with. Trust but verify.”

Asking some key questions and finding the answers will let you make better decisions about corn hybrids and help boost your return on investment. Parkinson will delve into these topics during his “Enhancing a Regenerative Corn Production Program” presentation at the 2025 ProfitProAG’s Winter Conference on Feb. 19-20 in Albert Lea, Minnesota. He’ll also participate in the grower panel “What is the #1 Way I’ve Learned to Boost Farm Profitability” during the Winter Conference, which will be held at ProfitProAG’s headquarters.

Parkinson has worked in the seed industry for 40+ years and has watched it transform from conventional corn to GMO-traited corn. Now, the industry is evolving back toward modern, genetically developed, research-driven conventional corn.

“You can trim your seed costs and improve crop performance with stay-green traits and other benefits from these modern, conventional corn hybrids,” said Parkinson, who encourages you to ask these five questions of your seed dealer:

1. What’s the purity of your seed? (Parkinson has seen contamination levels as high as 9%!)
2. What’s the warm germination rate of your seed? (This measures the percentage of seeds in a sample that successfully germinate when placed in warm, ideal conditions.)
3. What’s the cold germination rate of your seed? (This measures the percentage of seeds that germinate when exposed to cold temperatures.)
4. Can I return the seed to you? (You might be surprised to find out that some companies don’t accept returns.)
5. Is there a replant policy on your products?



“Tiny differences in management can lead to overwhelming differences in output and profitability.”

- Dr. Jim Ladlie

Give yourself more flexibility

These questions are timely, especially since Parkinson is seeing more weak plants in fields across the Midwest. “These corn plants have zero ears and scrawny stalks that are about one-fourth to one-half of an inch in diameter—about the size of a pencil,” said Parkinson, who covers Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Kansas, South Dakota, North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Nebraska.

These aren’t healthy, productive plants—and they cost you profit potential. That’s why it’s vital to ask key questions of your seed supplier—and be willing to look at new options if you don’t get the answers you need.

“There’s an expression in crop production that ‘it all starts with the seed,’ but it really starts with your seed supplier,” Parkinson said. “If you do things the same way you’ve always done them, you’re taking a huge risk. It pays to look at things from a new perspective and ask key questions to give yourself more flexibility.”

This flexibility isn’t just a smart business strategy; it’s an important way to protect your family’s future, Parkinson added.

“ProfitProAG’s philosophy revolves around overcoming obstacles and controlling the controllables for better results. Optimizing corn profitability starts with purchasing high-quality seed. Asking your seed dealer some key questions and evaluating the answers to make better decisions is a powerful way to control the controllables.”