



Christian Azar retires from Sollio Agriculture

Christian Azar will retire from Sollio Agriculture in mid-June, 2021. Christian has been working as a breeder for Sollio for the last 25 years. He initiated the soybean, barley, and oat breeding programs for Sollio. Through the years with Sollio, he has also overseen selections for corn, forages, and spring and winter cereals. He was also involved with pea, canola, and linseed selections, always working at bringing the best possible cultivars to market to help producers.

After his B.Sc. (83) at McGill, Christian worked as a sales representative for the Québec based company Agrocenters, and learned how important seed genetics was for producers to be successful. Living in Beauce (QC) for a few years, where frost could hit every month of the year, it struck him how genetic improvement was needed for crops so that they could be better adapted to a variety of growing conditions. He experimented with Gaspé Flint corn for a few years on top of those acidic, cool, rainy, frost-bitten hills. Well, that was enough to convince him he had to acquire breeder skills. In 1993, expecting Dr. Harold R. Klinck to take him on as a graduate student to learn cash crop improvement, he was informed, to his dismay, that Dr. Klinck had passed away. Christian had been working as an undergrad summer student at the Emile A. Lods Agronomy Research Centre, where Dr. Klinck left a positive impression on him.

Spring is always around the corner; so is hope. In 1993, Christian started his master's degree with Dr. Diane Mather, who replaced Dr. Klinck at McGill. He benefited from financial support from the Indian Agricultural Program of Ontario (IAPO), for which he is still very grateful. His master's thesis was on the characterization of corn landraces, which were still being cultivated by Indigenous Ontario producers at that time. He felt privileged to be allowed to grow these amazing open-pollinated cultivars.

From June 1996 to June 2021, Christian has been working as a plant breeder for Sollio, fulfilling his goal of improving cash crop adaptation to a variety of growing conditions.

“I would like to warmly thank those who helped me achieve my goal of becoming a plant breeder. You did make a difference.”



Indian Agricultural Program of Ontario: for providing financial support

Dr. Diane Mather: My thesis director and teacher, McGill

Dr. Bob Hamilton: Corn Breeder, AAFC

Dr. Harvey Voldeng: Soybean Breeder, AAFC

Dr. Harold R. Klinck: Cereal breeder, my teacher, McGill

Dr. Waldemar E. Sackston: My plant pathology teacher, McGill

Dr. Ralph H. Estey: My plant pathology teacher, McGill

“I also want to thank my colleagues, my fellow breeders, and all the plant science enthusiasts I have met. You were all significant encounters in my professional life. So long!”