

## **A Season That Reminded Us What “Normal” Really Means**

Looking back on 2025, it's hard not to shake your head at how much the season packed in. We started the year with soils that couldn't warm up fast enough and fields that stayed wet long after the planters were fueled and ready. What began as a cool, unsettled spring quickly flipped into heat and dryness, setting the tone for one of the most uneven, unpredictable growing years we've seen in a while. And yet, through each weather swing, Renk growers and hybrids proved their resilience.

The first few weeks of the season were defined by slow emergence and fields that showed every difference in residue management, planting depth, and soil type. Early growth stalled in cooler pockets, and in many areas it felt like crops were waiting for permission to start. But as June arrived, so did the heat — fast. Warm days and accelerating GDUs pushed vegetative growth quickly, and for many growers, the season finally felt like it had woken up. That warm, dry stretch also brought out stress differences between hybrids, especially in fields that entered June carrying shallow root systems after the slow, wet start.

From midseason through August, weather chaos became a running theme. Wind events in Minnesota, South Dakota, and Iowa snapped plants and bruised stalks, hail cut ragged patterns across soybean canopies, and scattered downpours created pockets of luxury moisture next to acres that stayed stubbornly dry. By late summer, it felt like no two fields — sometimes no two passes — experienced the same story. If 2024 taught us about resilience, 2025 taught us about adaptation.

Disease pressure surged late in the year, with southern rust making one of its most widespread northern pushes to date. Warm nights and humidity provided perfect conditions, and we saw clear separation between older genetics and newer VT4P, TRE, and PCE hybrids that held cleaner under pressure. Goss's wilt, NCLB, and tar spot remained part of the season's background noise but behaved differently across regions. Heavy-residue fields saw the most tar spot development, while storm-damaged acres became hotspots for Goss's. Even ear molds and physoderma showed up in isolated fields where late rains slowed dry-down. The constant across all of it: hybrids with strong stay-green and late plant health finished the year stronger and with noticeably better test weight.

Weeds also wrote a major chapter in the 2025 story. After the cool spring delayed canopy development, waterhemp and giant ragweed took advantage. Both Enlist systems and dicamba programs this year saw issues, and narrow-row soybeans showed a meaningful advantage in early canopy closure. That weed pressure didn't just influence fall appearance — it impacted yield across wide areas of the Midwest, reminding us again how much early season competition shapes final performance.

While the growing conditions were challenging, 2025 was one of Renk's most meaningful years for research advancement. This season marked the largest use yet of drone analytics in our system, with more than 240 acres mapped using NDVI and multispectral layers from the Mavic 3M platform. Locations like Brewster, MN, and Menomonie, WI, provided full-season imagery that helped us track stand uniformity, vigor, emergence patterns, disease onset, and late-season plant health in ways that boots-on-the-ground scouting simply can't capture at scale. These insights will be useful in our 2026 advancement decisions, giving us clearer hybrid separation, better stress-environment understanding, and stronger product placement confidence.

Across corn and soybeans, 2025 reinforced a handful of truths. Early uniformity still sets the tone for the entire year. Heat-stress tolerance continues to rise in importance as July and August temperatures trend warmer. Fungicide timing — especially for rust — is now a northern conversation, not just a southern one. Canopy architecture in soybeans matters more with every high-pressure weed year. And biological seed treatments like Resilient™ AP are carving out a real place in improving early vigor and stand consistency, especially in uneven spring environments.

Despite the curveballs, product performance across the Renk lineup held impressively steady. Hybrids with deep kernel depth, strong Goss's/NCLB tolerance, and late-season standability proved their value across multiple states. Soybeans with strong IDC and branching scored well in both clean and stressed fields. And where growers paired good agronomy with strong genetics, the year delivered far better yields than early-season conditions suggested.

What stands out most as we close the book on 2025 is not the challenges but the clarity those challenges created. This season pressure-tested our pipeline, sharpened our placement recommendations, and gave us confidence heading into 2026. With more drone data, more research locations, and more environmental variation than ever, we're entering the new year with a sharper view of what works, why it works, and where it fits.

If 2025 was a stress test, Renk passed it — and so did the growers who partnered with us along the way. And now we take everything learned this year and roll it forward, ready to turn those lessons into even better decisions, stronger hybrids, and another season of real-world, Midwest-proven results.

