

Norwest Equity Partners sells seed treatment developer to BASF for \$1 billion

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Norwest Equity Partners has sold Iowa seed treatment developer Becker Underwood Inc. for \$1.02 billion. The sale to German chemical company BASF closed on November 21. Norwest Equity Partners (NEP), a Minneapolis-based middle market investment firm that is San Francisco-based Wells Fargo & Co.'s (NYSE: WFC) private equity unit, bought a majority stake in Becker Underwood in 2004. Since then, Becker Underwood "increased revenue and profitability four-fold, completed eight strategic add-on acquisitions, and doubled its number of employees across the world," NEP said in a news release. Becker Underwood was founded in 1982 with only one product — an agricultural marking dye called Spray Tracer. The company, based in Ames, Iowa, reported \$246 million in revenue in the year ended Sept. 30. Becker Underwood will be what BASF called "the cornerstone" of its new Functional Crop Care unit. "From guidance on both organic and acquisitive growth strategies, operational insights, and the commitment of capital and global resources, NEP helped build us into a global leader and provider of innovative, biological solutions for a wide array of crops across multiple geographies," Becker Underwood CEO Peter Innes said in a statement. "The firm has been instrumental to our success and helped position us for our successful sale to BASF."

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