



FEBRUARY 2006

10 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ROUNDUP READY ALFALFA

1. Roundup Ready alfalfa will contaminate organic and other non-GM alfalfa seed and hay

Roundup Ready (RR) alfalfa will further decrease farmers' non-GM feed options. Currently, beef producers who wish to feed non-GM grain have limited options because of the rampant spread of GM traits in corn and soybeans. It is estimated that 50% of the conventional (non-GM) corn and soybean seed supply, and 80% of the conventional canola seed supply, contains a GM trait. Certified organic alfalfa growers risk losing premiums for their product and/or organic certification if GM traits transfer from RR fields to their own.

2. Roundup Ready alfalfa will increase the cost of organic milk and beef

In 2005, the U.S. could not fulfill its demand for organic milk, primarily because organic dairy farmers could not find enough organic feed. The dairy industry is the leading consumer of alfalfa. The demand for organic feed for beef and dairy cows increases the need to protect organic and other non-GM alfalfa from RR alfalfa contamination. In the event that RR alfalfa is widely adopted, consumers can expect the prices of organic products, especially milk and beef products, derived from alfalfa to increase and to be subject to shortages.

3. Roundup Ready alfalfa will increase herbicide use

Only 17% of alfalfa in the U.S. is currently treated with herbicides. Herbicide use on herbicide-tolerant crops has increased by over 130 million pounds since 1996. The National Center for Food and Agriculture Policy estimates that in California alone, 200,000 more pounds of herbicides will be applied per year with the introduction of RR alfalfa.

4. Roundup Ready alfalfa will increase the potential for glyphosate (Roundup) resistant weeds

As more and more Roundup is used, the popular herbicide becomes less effective over time as weeds develop resistance to it. Farmers must resort to less friendly and more costly chemicals to control Roundup-resistant weeds, the very chemicals farmers were told RR technology would wean out. The spread of Roundup-resistant weeds has outpaced new tools for controlling them, leaving countless farmers with few options to deal with thousands of acres of problem weeds that Roundup cannot kill. Roundup-resistant weeds identified in the U.S. include pigweed (waterhemp), horseweed (maretail), and ryegrass.

5. Monsanto's patents on Roundup Ready technology transfer unfair liability risks to farmers

Many liability questions remain unanswered by our regulatory and judicial systems, including who is accountable for the spread of patented traits and ownership of contaminated seed. Unless laws governing liability are reformed, farmers who don't plant GM crops are responsible for protecting themselves from contamination by GM traits. USDA does not require RR alfalfa growers to plant buffer areas. Monsanto enforces a strict contract called a Technology Agreement that shields it from liability.

6. Roundup Ready alfalfa will ruin the hay export market for Pacific Northwest growers

Japan is the biggest importer of U.S. hay and Japanese consumers demand GM-free hay. Even if the Japanese government approves import of RR alfalfa, customers have already told U.S. export companies that they will not purchase GM hay. The leading export states are Washington, California, and Oregon. Although only 5% of U.S. alfalfa is exported, Pacific Northwest producers export a much higher percentage of their crop. They stand to lose everything if their markets abroad are eliminated.

7. Roundup Ready alfalfa threatens the honey industry

Honey bees an important pollinator of alfalfa, and most honey produced in the U.S. is derived from alfalfa pollen. Because GM material is detectable in honey products, honey producers—especially those who export—may be forced to test their products for GM traits.

8. The potential effects of Roundup Ready alfalfa feed on the health and productivity of livestock and wildlife have not been analyzed by independent scientists.

No independent research exists on the potential effects of RR alfalfa (or any RR crop) on livestock health and productivity. The U.S. Department of Agriculture/Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service did not analyze the effect of Roundup-Ready alfalfa on migratory birds and other non-target organisms before approving this new crop.

9. Roundup Ready alfalfa will increase farmers' seed and chemical costs.

RR alfalfa costs twice as much as other proprietary seed varieties, because a technology fee is tacked onto the price of GM seed. Monsanto's Technology Agreement states that growers need to purchase its trademark glyphosate herbicide (Roundup), as opposed to a cheaper generic brand, in order to receive warranties on seeds and other benefits. Farmers who adopt RR alfalfa will spend money on additional chemicals to control volunteer alfalfa and glyphosate-resistant weeds, as well as to kill RR alfalfa at the end of a stand's life.

10. Roundup Ready alfalfa increases the level of corporate control over American agriculture, and further reduces the availability of public alfalfa seed varieties

Monsanto controls over 90% of the global GM seed market through ownership of patents and acquisition of other seed companies. Adding alfalfa to the line of RR products increases Monsanto's grip on American farms and farmers, and allows a monopoly over a large segment of our food production system.



WORC:

Billings Office

2401 Montana Ave., #301 (406)252-9672
Billings, MT 59101 (406)252-1092 FAX
billings@worc.org
www.worc.org

Washington, D.C. Office

110 Maryland Ave., NE, #307 (202)547-7040
Washington, DC 20002 (202)543-0978 FAX
dc@worc.org

Lemmon, SD Office

2307 5th Ave NE (701)376-7077
Lemmon, SD 57638 (701)376-7077 FAX
jerilynn@worc.org

Montrose, CO Office

60584 Horizon Drive (970)323-6849
Montrose, CO 81401 (970)323-8840 FAX
montrose@worc.org

WORC Member Groups:

DAKOTA RESOURCE COUNCIL

PO Box 1095 (701)483-2851
Dickinson, ND 58601 (701)483-2854 FAX
drc@drcinfo.com
www.drcinfo.com

DAKOTA RURAL ACTION

PO Box 549 (605)697-5204
Brookings, SD 57006 (605)697-6230 FAX
action@dakotarural.org
www.draction.org

IDAHO RURAL COUNCIL

PO Box 118 (208)352-4477
Bliss, ID 83314 (208)352-4645 FAX
irc@idahoruralcouncil.org
www.idahoruralcouncil.org

NORTHERN PLAINS RESOURCE COUNCIL

2401 Montana Ave., #200 (406)248-1154
Billings, MT 59101 (406)248-2110 FAX
info@northernplains.org
www.northernplains.org

OREGON RURAL ACTION

PO Box 1231 (541)975-2411
La Grande, OR 97850 (541)975-1844 FAX
jsd@oraction.org
www.oraction.org

POWDER RIVER BASIN RESOURCE COUNCIL

934 N. Main St. (307)672-5809
Sheridan, WY 82801 (307)672-5800 FAX
resources@powderriverbasin.org
www.powderriverbasin.org

WESTERN COLORADO CONGRESS

P.O. Box 1931 (970)256-7650
Grand Junction, CO 81501 (970)243-5984 FAX
info@wccongress.org
www.wccongress.org