

Information Update for Alfalfa Farmers Regarding Roundup Ready Alfalfa

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has issued an Administrative Order outlining additional production practices for current growers of Roundup Ready (RR) alfalfa. This order clarifies and replaces a July 2007 APHIS Administrative Order.

The July order outlined requirements regarding the use of pollinators, equipment cleaning procedures and labeling procedures for RR alfalfa hay and seed. The supplemental order has additional cleaning requirements for equipment that makes large square hay bales. It also provides options for labeling RR alfalfa hay to help relieve the regulatory burden for RR alfalfa growers while maintaining effective production practices.

The guidelines in the Administrative Order apply to RR alfalfa that was planted by March 30, 2007. The U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California has prohibited the planting of RR alfalfa after March 30, 2007. Under the court's ruling, RR alfalfa that was planted by the cutoff date can remain in the ground as long as producers follow APHIS' production practices, as outlined in the Administrative Order.

RR alfalfa is genetically engineered to resist the herbicide glyphosate (known commercially as Roundup). In 2003, the Monsanto Company and Forage Genetics International submitted a petition to APHIS requesting nonregulated status for RR alfalfa, and APHIS deregulated the line in June 2005. In compliance with a May 3, 2007, judgment and order by the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, RR alfalfa is once again a regulated article and APHIS must prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in support of its 2005 decision to deregulate RR alfalfa. It is important to note that the

court did not overturn federal conclusions regarding the safety of the crop for food and feed purposes or APHIS' determination that RR alfalfa is not a plant pest. Rather, the court concluded that APHIS had not adequately documented potential environmental impacts, asserting that additional data are necessary for APHIS to have reached some of its conclusions in the environmental assessment that accompanied its determination.

A future decision regarding the deregulation of RR alfalfa will be issued only after the completion of an appropriately documented EIS.

Additional Information

For a copy of the latest Administrative Order and more information, please visit:

APHIS Web site

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/alfalfa.shtml>

Additional Contact Information

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