

Developing a Coexistence Plan for Alfalfa Hay in Eastern Canada

A Value Chain Workshop
Wednesday October 24, 2012
Delta Kitchener-Waterloo
105 King Street, Kitchener, Ontario

Breakout Table(s) #1 - COEXISTENCE PRINCIPLES FOR ALFALFA HAY PRODUCTION FOR DOMESTIC MARKETS

Some participants in all three breakout sessions, wanted it made clear that they do not support the commercialization of Roundup Ready alfalfa in any region of Canada.

- 1. What conditions are necessary to facilitate successful gene transfer from one alfalfa hay field to another alfalfa hay field?**
 - The conditions were well identified by panel presenters in the morning session. The most significant is flowering of GM alfalfa which will facilitate pollen transfer. The presence of native pollinators and honey and other bees, wind and machinery also would transfer pollen.
- 2. How much will gene flow from GM hay fields affect non-GM cultivated alfalfa hay systems, feral alfalfa or wild relatives over time?**
 - There are no wild relatives at this time. Feral alfalfa populations are not as present in Eastern Canada as in the west, but there is no accurate evidence of how present it may be. There really is no way to know how much gene flow there will be, or how quickly it will happen.
- 3. How can hay producers reduce or eliminate the chances of successful gene flow from GM hay crops to neighbouring conventional or organic alfalfa hay crops?**
 - Buffer strips will be required. The size of the buffers needs to be established based on consultation with scientists and forage specialists, and neighbours will need to communicate and agree
 - The buffer strips need to be mowed regularly to prevent flowering of any feral alfalfa
 - GM alfalfa needs to be cut before flowering, and nothing must be left to flower
 - Drills and seeders need to be cleaned between fields, and haying equipment must also be cleaned before moving between fields
- 4. How can we reduce or eliminate the chances of successful gene flow from GM alfalfa hay fields to feral alfalfa?**
 - Buffer strips need to be mowed regularly
 - Ditches need to be cut before any feral alfalfa flowers
- 5. How can we reduce or eliminate the chances of successful gene flow from feral alfalfa to neighbouring conventional or organic alfalfa hay.**
 - Buffer strips need to be mowed regularly
 - Ditches need to be cut before any feral alfalfa flowers

6. What is the capacity of hay producers to undertake the measures identified?

- No answer to this question

7. What enforcement measures would have to be in place to ensure coexistence practises are followed?

- Best Management practises should be included in grower contracts for GM alfalfa, and companies need to take immediate action and publicize it when growers don't abide by the contracts and agreements
- Seed companies selling GM alfalfa should consider requiring growers to provide GPS tracking information for all GM alfalfa fields so that monitoring of best management practises would be more easily done
- Seed companies should be willing to take back any unused seed with no penalty
- In addition to penalties, companies should clearly communicate the importance and benefits of the best management practises, and could consider some sort of incentives
- Before the technology is commercialized, education programs should be developed to ensure that producers are aware of the best management practises.