

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) #2 - COEXISTENCE PRINCIPLES FOR ALFALFA HAY PRODUCED FOR ON-FARM CONSUMPTION

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. Would the use of GM alfalfa production system require changes in production practises for hay for on-farm feeding in order to comply with coexistence requirements?**
 - Since there are no coexistence plans in place now, this part of the question was not answered.
- 2. What changes would have to occur to production practises e.g. To reduce or eliminate potential gene flow from GM hay fields to neighbouring hay fields and o reduce or eliminate potential gene flow to feral alfalfa populations?**
 - Feral alfalfa is not a problem in Eastern Canada
 - Alfalfa hay fields, particularly the GM fields would need to be harvested before 10% bloom
 - Buffer strips would be necessary between GM and non-GM fields, and the strips would need to be cut to ensure that any feral alfalfa is controlled. If there are alfalfa seed fields on the farm, the buffers would need to be larger
 - Producers who want to grow GM alfalfa should make an effort to locate any organic hay production in the area and take extra steps to mitigate gene flow
 - Producers who want to grow GM alfalfa need to talk to their neighbours
- 3. Is it likely that the cultivation of GM alfalfa would lead to the increase in the development of glyphosate-tolerant weeds on farms that utilize the technology? What measures would need to be taken to reduce or eliminate the prospects of glyphosate tolerant weeds in glyphosate tolerant alfalfa hay production systems?**
 - It is not likely that there would be any increased risk of the development of glyphosate tolerant weeds, as long as best management practises are followed. Farmers already have experience using BMPs for other GM crops.
 - Best management practises include crop rotation, proper tillage, herbicide use rotation (multiple modes of action).

4. Would the use of GM alfalfa impact animal feed safety or feed quality?

- In a presentation made earlier it was stated that Roundup is a mineral chelator, that ties up minerals and requires more supplementation in feed. The study and scientific data should be provided/circulated
- Feed quality should be improved with the use of the technology because weeds could be reduced or eliminated

5. If measures are required by coexistence plans for production and on-farm feeding of GM alfalfa, what is the capacity of producers to take the measure identified?

- The requirements that have been identified by this group would not be overly burdensome for producers – ensure harvest before 10% bloom, maintain buffer zones etc.

6. What enforcement measures would be required?

- Best management practises/stewardship requirements should be part of the contract signed by the grower and producers who do not practise them should have their technology license revoked, and their access to the technology in the future denied.