Dicamba Resistant Seed Technology

Issue

Monsanto developed Dicamba resistant traits for soybeans and cotton to give farmers another option for weed control and herbicide resistance. Dicamba has been used for decades as a herbicide but the product is very volatile and damaging to non-resistant crops when off-target movement occurs. Monsanto and BASF each developed labeled Dicamba products for over-the-top spraying of soybeans and cotton which contained new formulations designed to lessen off-target movements. The products have very specific label requirements relative to spraying conditions and application methods. These products were labeled for use in the 2017 crop year. There have been numerous complaints of damage from farmers who did not plant Dicamba resistant crops. Reports to the Tennessee Department of Agriculture involve several thousand acres. As a result, the department issued emergency rules placing new restrictions on the use of these Dicamba products. Other states such as Arkansas and Missouri have either banned use of these products or placed new restrictions on use.

Background

Dicamba is a broad spectrum herbicide mostly used to control broadleaf weeds. Dicamba was introduced in 1967 and is estimated to be the fifth most widely used herbicide worldwide. Dicamba works by causing uncontrollable growth in the targeted plant therefore causing it to die off quickly from the severe growth.

Volatility of Dicamba has always been a challenge for producers. Dicamba is extremely mobile through spray drift or vaporization. Off-target damage to crops sensitive to Dicamba usually show signs within 10 days making it difficult to know whether drift or vaporization occurred.

Monsanto developed soybean and cotton seeds resistant to the effects of Dicamba in an effort to increase herbicide options for farmers experiencing weed resistance to Glyphosate. While most brands of Dicamba were not labeled for over-the-top use to control weeds, Monsanto and BASF developed two separate formulations of Dicamba with decreased volatility. Both formulations were given approval by EPA with strict label guidelines for use on Dicamba resistant seeds.

2017 is the first crop year for the newly approved formulations. There have been numerous complaints to the Tennessee Department of Agriculture of damage from Dicamba to sensitive crops. Damage also occurred in other states prompting a ban on the use of Dicamba in Arkansas and new restrictions in other states. Tennessee recently implemented emergency rules with new restrictions on Dicamba. The restrictions are:

- Anyone applying Dicamba products must be certified as a private applicator or licensed as a pest control operator in the category of Agricultural Pest Control (AGE), and is required to keep records for such applications.
- The use of older formulations of Dicamba products for the remainder of the 2017 agricultural growing season is prohibited.
- To minimize the potential for off-target movement of the product due to temperature inversion, Dicamba may only be applied from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the respective time zone for the location of application.
- Applying Dicamba over the top of cotton after first bloom is prohibited.

Questions

1. Do you believe the new state restrictions will help prevent the off-target movement of Dicamba?
2. Should training be required of all farmers and private applicators before purchase and use of the new formulations of Dicamba herbicides?
3. Is Dicamba technology a long term necessity to provide weed control and address weed resistance?

Farm Bureau Policy

Ag Chemicals (Partial)

We support the Tennessee Department of Agriculture assuming primacy for applicable pesticide laws and regulations. A program developed by Tennesseans should be more sensitive to the needs of Tennessee farmers.

We support legislation limiting authority for pesticide regulation solely to federal and state governments.

State and federal agencies using pest control chemicals should adhere to the same restrictions and public scrutiny as farmers.

We oppose any regulations requiring a permit before application of a chemical for crop protection. We oppose curtailment of the proper use of agricultural chemicals, unless further research and scientific data detects injury to health and well-being would result.

We support the continued use of agricultural chemicals that currently have no viable alternatives, such as methyl bromide. We encourage research to find alternatives for methyl bromide that are economically viable, of equal performance and sensitive to the exposure needs of individual crops. Until a viable alternative is found, we support the use of a fair, science- based process for Critical Use Exemptions. Methyl bromide is imperative to vegetable production. With no viable alternative being presented, the usage of this agricultural chemical should be restored to its original usage and volume restrictions not to be placed on producers.

Farmers should not be mandated to have “Certified Crop Advisors” for buying and using agricultural inputs.

We urge Congress and the appropriate agencies to address the cost of the label registration and re-registration for chemicals to be used on minor-use crops and to provide methods of label clearance for them. More prompt certification of agricultural chemicals for commercial usage should be pursued to the maximum degree possible without endangering public health. Prompt certification reduces farm production costs and promotes conservation tillage practices. Those who keep accurate records of federally restricted use pesticide applications are good managers. By using pesticide re-cords, farmers can make decisions that save time and money. Maintaining up to date records (at least 2 years after application) regarding the use of federally restricted use pesticides is also required by law and such records are subject to random inspection. Pesticide record keeping requirements should be closely monitored to ensure confidentiality and fairness to all farmers.

We oppose USDA unilateral changes in record keeping requirements.

We support the research for the control and eradication for herbicide/pesticide resistant weeds/species.

Farmers should not be charged a fee for restricted use pesticide certification or re-certification.