



OFARM Files Comments With USDA in Opposition to GE Alfalfa

January 26, 2010

Re: USDA non-approval of Monsanto's GE Alfalfa

I am writing on behalf of the Organic Farmers' Agency for Relationship Marketing (OFARM) to the USDA not to approve Monsanto's GE Alfalfa.

The Organic Farmers' Agency for Relationship Marketing (OFARM) is a farmer marketing agency-in-common. We represent organic field crop cooperatives and farmer marketing associations in a region that spans the major grain producing areas of the United States, over an 18-state area.

GM contamination has the potential to sacrifice the integrity of the certified organic food industry. The integrity of the organic label and subsequent marketability must be maintained.

USDA has a responsibility to protect organic integrity. Consumers rely on USDA's "organic" label for its integrity. Accidental or incidental contamination by GE crops will severely impact the label's integrity in a negative way with consumers.

USDA has a responsibility to protect all farmers, organic included, who choose to grow non-GE crops.

USDA must consider any future for alfalfa that includes protections from contamination for organic and conventional farmers and exporters.

USDA has a responsibility to protect the growing organic industry, especially organic farmers. Relying solely on Monsanto's business as usual "best practices" ensures widespread contamination as we have already seen in canola, soybeans and is now appearing in corn. From practical experience of GE testing on sales of organic grain, there is indication's of significant GE contamination showing up in these crops costing organic farmers thousands of dollars in lost sales.

GE alfalfa would significantly increase pesticide use and increase harm to human health and the environment.

USDA admits (correctly) that introduction of Roundup Ready alfalfa will increase Roundup use. However, USDA's assertion that the increase is not significant and that Roundup will replace other, more toxic herbicides is a mis-guided assumption, to say the least.

The harm to small and mid-sized organic farms in these hard economic times would be significant contrary to USDA's conclusion that conventional growers are not threatened by GE contamination. In fact the economic impacts will be significant.

OFARM and the organic grain farmers it represents across the U.S. is concerned about protecting the integrity of the forages and grains and markets our member organizations currently sell to in North America, Europe and Japan. Any incident of contamination would be disastrous to our farmers.