On hold! Opposition slows Dow's 2,4-D corn

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In good news for farmers and communities across the country, Dow announced last week that it is no longer planning to market its 2,4-D corn for the 2013 planting season.

The new genetically engineered (GE) seed has spurred strong opposition from farmers, consumers and public health officials, and the widespread concern seems to have slowed approval of the product. Organic and conventional farmers alike are worried about damage to their crops from 2,4-D drift; they also cite health risks to their families, especially their children who are particularly vulnerable to the chemical.

A decision from USDA on 2,4-D corn was expected before the end of 2012, but appears to be on hold. The Dow product is the first in a "pipeline" of new herbicide-tolerant GE products designed to combat increasing resistance of weeds to glyphosate under Monsanto's RoundUp Ready systems.

Millions of acres of weeds have now developed resistance to glyphosate, leading farmers to use higher quantities of Roundup and older, even more hazardous herbicides to try to beat back the weeds. Recent studies document a dramatic increase in the use of herbicides since herbicide tolerant GE crops were introduced, with an estimated 500+ million pounds of additional herbicides applied between 1996-2011.

As PAN's senior scientist Marcia Ishii-Eiteman told Reuters,

> Weed resistance to chemical herbicides is one of the biggest problems farmers now face, and that is a direct result of converting so much of our farmland to herbicide-resistant GE crops. We need to get out of this futile chemical arms race, fast.

Dow officials say they now plan to begin selling 2,4-corn seeds for planting by the end of this year, targeting release in the 2014 season. Expecting that USDA will eventually approve their product, Dow is moving forward with demonstration plots and promotion activities in the Midwest and South. 2,4-D soybean and cotton seed are also in the USDA queue for approval.

Meanwhile, public pressure to block the release of this next generation of GE seeds continues to mount.

Take Action » PAN and partners have already delivered over 400,000 signatures to USDA Secretary

Vilsack from members across the country concerned about 2,4-D corn and the pipeline of GE products. The next batch of signatures will be delivered soon; please sign on.

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