



National Grain and Feed  
Association



North American Export  
Grain Association

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For Release  
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## **Grain Industry Urges Syngenta to Reconsider Plan to Commercialize Biotech Corn Seed Not Approved in Export Markets**

WASHINGTON – The nation’s two leading trade associations representing the grain, feed and grain processing industries today (April 4) joined in urging Syngenta Seeds Inc. to reconsider and reverse its plan to commercialize its Agrisure RW™ biotechnology-enhanced corn seed for planting this year because it has not obtained regulatory approval for food and feed use in Japan and other U.S. export markets.

The National Grain and Feed Association (NGFA) and North American Export Grain Association (NAEGA) said that what they termed Syngenta’s “ill-conceived” plan risks endangering U.S. corn and corn product exports. Further, the NGFA and NAEGA said, Syngenta’s action could set a dangerous precedent concerning the future introduction of biotechnology-enhanced traits before they are approved in countries, like Japan, that have a fully functioning, science-based regulatory-approval process for such products.

“We already are aware that Japanese buyers are developing contingency plans to purchase corn and corn products from non-U.S. origins if Syngenta releases this seed for planting and Japanese government approval is not forthcoming prior to harvest,” said NGFA President Kendell W. Keith and NAEGA President and Chief Executive Officer Gary C. Martin. “Given the painful lessons learned in the past, we urge Syngenta to join with us in protecting the marketability of U.S. corn and corn products by delaying the introduction of Agrisure RW corn seed until it receives full regulatory approval in Japan and other important U.S. corn export markets.”

Syngenta announced its intent to begin selling its new Agrisure RW™ corn seed immediately after the March 16 decision by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to deregulate the product after finding no adverse plant health or environmental concerns. The biotechnology-enhanced trait, which contains modified protein MIR604 to control corn rootworm insects, previously received authorizations from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

“Given the U.S. government’s deregulation of Agrisure RW corn, we have no reason to question its safety for food or feed,” said the NGFA’s Keith and NAEGA’s Martin. “But we do have important reasons for opposing its commercialization at this time because of its marketability.”

The NGFA and NAEGA said they shared concerns raised by the National Corn Growers Association, which has urged Syngenta not to commercialize this biotech-enhanced corn seed this planting season since the product has not gained full regulatory approval in Japan. “As the corn growers’ organization has noted,” Keith and Martin said, “doing otherwise risks endangering U.S. export markets for corn and corn products.”

The two grain organizations noted that the Japan Feed Trade Association, representing major buyers of U.S. corn, also has urged Syngenta to delay introduction of Agrisure RW corn or any other biotech-enhanced trait until full Japanese government approval has been granted.

The NGFA, established in 1896, consists of 900 member companies from all sectors of the grain, feed, processing and exporting business that operate about 6,000 facilities nationwide and handle more than 70 percent of all U.S. grains and oilseeds. NAEGA, established in 1912, is comprised of private and publicly owned companies and farmer-owned cooperatives that ship virtually all of the bulk grains, oilseeds and their primary derivative products exported each year from the United States.

The NGFA and NAEGA said it was misguided and naïve to believe that Syngenta’s efforts to channel Agrisure RW corn away from export markets would be 100 percent successful. “It’s impossible to completely segregate this specific biotech variety from the rest of the commodity stream because of pollen drift, inadvertent commingling and human error,” Keith and Martin said. “Yet, export markets will require ironclad guarantees if this biotech trait is not approved overseas, since Japan and other foreign governments impose a zero-tolerance policy on unapproved biotech products.”

Further, NAEGA noted that Syngenta has failed to provide commercial assurances that exporters would be compensated for damages that may result if Agrisure RW corn is present in commodity export shipments.

The NGFA and NAEGA also noted that the National Corn Growers Association has warned growers that if Syngenta proceeds, harvested corn containing the MIR604 protein will not be eligible to be marketed under its “Market Choices™” label that seeks to direct biotech traits away from corn product shipments destined for Europe, and that there will be “serious restrictions” on the marketability of such corn. The NGFA and NAEGA said the same would be true for processed and co-products from Agrisure RW corn, such as corn gluten and distillers dried grains with solubles (DDGS), which also would not be able to be marketed for export.

The NGFA and NAEGA also cited Syngenta’s “comprehensive grain use/marketing commitment” agreement that it is requiring producers to sign before obtaining Agrisure RW seed. Under the agreement, producers pledge to deliver Agrisure RW corn only to non-export locations and to sign a stewardship agreement “confirming that they understand their obligations to market the grain appropriately.”

The NAEGA and NGFA urged any grower signing such agreements with Syngenta to be fully cognizant of potential legal liabilities and market implications of subsequently delivering corn that may test positive for the Agrisure RW trait in general market channels used to supply commodity corn for export and other generic uses. “The potential for extremely costly rejections at export destinations is very real, and remains a

threat to our country's ability to provide commodities that comply with customer requirements," Martin and Keith warned.

The NGFA's membership encompasses all sectors of the industry, including country, terminal and export elevators; feed manufacturers; cash grain and feed merchants; end users of grain and grain products, including processors, flour millers, and livestock and poultry integrators; commodity futures brokers and commission merchants; and allied industries. The NGFA also consists of 35 affiliated state and regional grain and feed associations, as well as two international affiliated associations. The NGFA also has strategic alliances with the Pet Food Institute and the Grain Elevator and Processing Society, and has a joint operating and services agreement with NAEGA.

NAEGA member companies ship virtually all of the more than \$25 billion in exports of U.S. bulk grains, oilseeds and products derived therefrom. The Association's mission is to promote and sustain the development of commercial export of grain and oilseed trade from the United States.

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