

Corn Growers Reminded To Follow Refuge Requirements As Spring Planting Nears

ST. LOUIS, MO.

As the 2009 planting season approaches, National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) reminds U.S. Bt corn growers that the development of an Insect Resistance Management (IRM) plan is an essential and required part of their planning process.

To prevent or delay insect resistance, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires Bt corn growers to plant a refuge on their farm. These refuge acres ensure that rare resistant insects that feed on insect-protected varieties of corn will mate with susceptible insects and slow the development of resistance. Loss of the technology to resistance could cost U.S. farmers billions of dollars through yield reduction and increased pesticide use.

"Since the introduction of biotech traits, the vast majority of corn growers have followed refuge requirements to help protect the efficacy of this important technology," said Rob Korff, chairman of NCGA's Biotechnology Working Group. "Growers must continue to follow these requirements to help preserve the long-term value of this technology."

To help preserve Bt technology, the EPA established the Compliance Assurance Program. Under the program, thousands of growers are randomly surveyed about their IRM compliance practices each year through EPA mandated on-farm assessments. Growers who do not comply with refuge requirements can lose access to the technology. Similarly, seed dealers who do not follow through on their commitments stand to lose their ability to sell the products.

"Growers should take time to thoroughly re-

view their Bt trait provider's Product Use or Technical Guides and discuss refuge options with their Bt seed supplier prior to planting Bt traits," said Korff.

In addition to information provided by seed dealers and the Bt trait providers, NCGA has established a number of resources for growers developing IRM plans and a refuge strategy for their farm through the IRM Learning Center, an interactive tutorial available at www.ncga.com.

Suggestions for Growers Planting Stacked Bt Trait Corn

Stacked Bt traits, or products that contain both corn rootworm-protected and corn borer-protected traits, present unique management challenges for farmers. The refuge requirements for rootworm Bt traits are considerably more restrictive than the refuge requirements for corn borer Bt traits. Industry experts suggest growers consider the following recommendations to help simplify Bt corn planting and promote the longevity of Bt traits:

- Plant one common refuge that is void of Bt traits rather than planting a separate refuge for corn borer and corn rootworm.

- Plant the refuge in the same field as the Bt traits to help meet distance requirements for corn borer and corn rootworm refuges.

- Know the minimum required refuge size for a particular geography and Bt trait.

"In addition to protecting current technology, adherence to refuge requirements is important for the commercialization of next-generation biotech traits," said Korff. "Future traits that build on today's technology will only be successful if today's technology remains effective." Δ



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