

The Link To Clean Fields

Bayer Launches LibertyLink Soybeans Teamed With Ignite

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Bayer CropScience held its Mid-South LinkUp Tour and Field Day recently to showcase its Ignite herbicide and LibertyLink soybeans. With the built-in tolerance to Ignite, the LibertyLink trait provides excellent crop safety.

A nonselective alternative to the Roundup Ready® system, Ignite® herbicide pairs up well with the LibertyLink® trait. Ignite and the LibertyLink trait provide an excellent means for growers to rotate nonselective herbicides to effectively manage weed resistance and preserve the utility of herbicide-tolerant technologies. LibertyLink varieties are high-yielding, with no yield drag or lag. Bayer CropScience has broadly licensed the LibertyLink trait to multiple leading seed companies. The LibertyLink trait will be launched in soybeans in 2009.

Dr. Ford Baldwin, University of Arkansas retired weed scientist, gave an introduction to the system for the crowd in attendance.

"I want to talk a little bit about why I'm excited about this technology as a weed scientist," he began. "I was writing about resistance to glyphosate three or four years ago; in fact I spent all winter writing about it and it pretty much fell on deaf ears. The comment I would make in my articles a lot of times was 'The weeds are talking. Is anybody listening?'"

There hasn't been a technology change in over 10 years, so now a big detour sign, weeds' tolerance to glyphosate, is up in the middle of the road.

"We can no longer consider glyphosate a pigweed herbicide anymore and if you stop and think about that, that's huge," he continued.

People were shaking in their boots at the mention of soybean rust a few years ago, yet Baldwin was saying that without some decent alternative technology, palmer pigweed resistance could make soybean rust "look like a pup."

"That doesn't mean soybean rust is not important, but there are better answers to it, without alternative technology," he said.

Adding residual herbicides to the tank mixes helps curb resistance, but that's the same formula that wasn't working before Roundup Ready came along.

"It's obvious to me that's not the answer," Baldwin said. "We have to have a broad spectrum alternative and that's why I'm excited about the Liberty technology and Ignite herbicide."

New LibertyLink soybeans perform equal to or better than current commercial lines. Ignite herbicide protects yield potential and limits weed competition by killing weeds in days vs. weeks, and by controlling ALS- and glyphosate-resistant weeds.

"We had our first look at the LibertyLink/Ignite technology in 1995, and that was about the time the Roundup Ready technology went commercial," he added. "When you would look at those side by side back then you would say 'Ignite controls these weeds better than Roundup does.' Roundup controls some of these weeds better than Ignite does and there's going to be a real place for both of those as alternative technologies.' Now 13 years later we have come full circle. You can't look at it exactly like another Roundup Ready technology. It's a different herbicide, it's a very broad spectrum, non selective herbicide but it behaves much more like a contact herbicide."

Baldwin said that if farmers go out there and treat this technology just like Roundup Ready technology, it's going to fail.

"We've got to treat it like LibertyLink technology with Ignite herbicide and, if we do that, I can testify by these seed fields that we can make it work very well," Baldwin said.

One of the variety trials has harvested 89 bushels.

"You give us varieties that yield 89 bushels and I guarantee the weed guys will get the weeds controlled in them," Baldwin said. "The technology will work."

Baldwin had a few comments for the future. "One, don't get too hung up," he said. "A lot of people have been asking 'what about this water volume and what about tank mixing this and what about doing that?' You know the weeds don't stop changing and research can't and doesn't either."

"One of the things I've told the younger rice farmers that are growing these seed fields, 'if you're in this for the long haul, if you think about rotating LibertyLink soybeans with Roundup Ready soybeans with conventional rice, with Clearfield rice, all of a sudden you've got a resistance management tool right there.' If you'll just use it, you might not have to deal with any weed resistance issues in your care, plus I think in the future you'll see a lot of other innovations."

"The researchers are just now getting up to speed in really seeing where they need to go in a research program to really start tweaking it and developing it for this or that situation," he said. "I think that's going to be the future. The

other thing is these guys are looking long term down the road and thinking about stacking traits and I think you're going to see a lot of these companies, competitors or enemies so to speak, all of a sudden getting in bed together and stacking their different traits in varieties.

Baldwin said he's excited about this technology.

"As a weed guy, I was always used to being able to stand up in front of you and say 'we always have something better coming,' and you got complacent to that fact. You felt, don't worry



Dr. Ford Baldwin, (right) University of Arkansas retired Weed Scientist, visiting with Andy Hurst, Product Manager in marketing for herbicide traits for Bayer CropScience.

about resistance, the smart guys, the companies and the universities guys will have something by the time we need it. Hopefully we've made another step in the right direction. So use it right and hopefully we can keep it around for a long time."

Andy Hurst, product manager in marketing for herbicide traits including LibertyLink and Ignite herbicide out of Research Triangle Park, N.C., said Bayer is in the process of gaining European Union (EU) approval for the release of LibertyLink soybeans.

"Basically you have a multistep process," he said. "We've got seed production going on, we've got our regulatory timeline that we're diligently working towards and of course the development work from the weed control standpoint that is ongoing. But, thank goodness, all those pieces are converging together, our regulatory timeline is intact and we do expect approvals in all the major export countries for soybeans including the EU and China in time for the 2009 launch. So we have seed production in 2008 to accommodate a launch for around one million acres."

The seed production is spread throughout the Midwest all the way down to the midsouth and it's really based on maturities which are from a .5 to a 4.9 in the initial varieties that will be launched in 2009. Probably over 20 varieties will be available.

"LibertyLink soybeans will be the first time in soybeans since the launch of Roundup Ready that growers will have a truly viable alternative herbicide tolerant system so that they can continue to farm like they're set up to farm," Hurst said. "With Ignite's unique mode of action they can completely rotate away from glyphosate on some portion of their farm in order to maintain the utility of herbicide tolerance, but glyphosate tolerance for a long time to come."

Scientists are working with a variety of germ plasm originators in the soybean industry to ensure that the varieties that are launched have a wide range of relative maturities as well as other important agronomic characteristics like disease resistance, etc., so there will be varieties that will be adapted for all of the soybean growing area.

"The launch of Ignite herbicide is a very key part of this launch of LibertyLink in soybeans," he continued. "Ignite herbicide is labeled for use on all LibertyLink crops."

In the past, Ignite was launched with the launch of LibertyLink cotton but Ignite will completely replace Liberty herbicide in the Midwest market. Ignite will be 40 percent more concentrated than the current Liberty herbicide on the marketplace and it will be a different formulation package that will be more powerful so that growers can use a lower rate of the herbicide on all crop acres of LibertyLink.

"Ignite herbicide will completely replace Liberty in 2009," he said. "Ignite will be labeled for use on all LibertyLink crops, cotton, corn, canola and new LibertyLink soybeans so the advantage to the grower will be that one brand, one formulation will be used across all Liberty Link crops."

Rates of application will differ with the individual crops.

"That is correct, although consistently across crops our base rates will be 22 or 29 ounces," Hurst said. "We're still in the process of increasing the max use rate in soybeans. Currently that maximum use rate is 44 ounces."

In the midsouth alone, there are about 30 LibertyLink soybean seed producers, however there probably are 150 total, nationwide.

For some of the growers this is the third year they have grown LibertyLink seed.

"This is by far the largest scale of production leading up to the launch," Hurst said. "Farmers are overwhelmingly positive. We've tried to help them intensively manage to ensure that they were very happy with the results and yes the response has been very positive." △