

Kansas Growers Urged to "Know Before You Grow"

It is corn planting season in Kansas and the Kansas Corn Commission is again reminding growers to "Know Before You Grow." Through the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) website growers can view information on the release of new seed varieties, policy stances, biotech traits and grower agreements. The site, "Know Before Your Grow," is designed to help growers have a better understanding of the type of corn they're growing and the needs of their customers.

The Kansas Corn Commission funds NCGA's efforts to educate growers on trade policy and biotechnology. Recognizing the importance of the export markets, NCGA has actively educated growers with the Know Before You Grow website for several years.

Much of the state's corn is used in livestock feed for Kansas livestock and also for ethanol. Some, however, does go into export markets and many Kansas ethanol plants export dried distillers grains (DDGS). The NCGA Trade Policy and Biotechnology Action team, chaired by Wisconsin grower Jim Zimmerman is leading the Know Before You Grow effort.

"In a globalized agricultural economy, it is important that farmers understand the delicate balance that must be struck between ensuring access to the technologies while also safeguarding export markets," Zimmerman said. "The balance is especially challenging in the case of China since the country already has an asynchronous approval system for biotech traits. This is only compounded as China has currently fallen behind even their normal asynchronous approval timelines. . . . Both biotechnology and export markets play a key role in maintaining profitability. Making decisions based in solid information will be key to maintaining profitability moving forward."

In examining the specific case of Syngenta's Agrisure Duracade corn with China, the team looked at the importance of products to combat intense rootworm pressure seen in some areas. While the need to maintain export markets remains of great importance to NCGA, it also saw the potential difficulty farmers would face if a regulatory system that is not functioning overseas could bar farmers' access to necessary technologies indefinitely. In light of these circumstances, NCGA asked that Syngenta develop a controlled limited release of the trait that would keep corn grown using Agrisure Duracade seed out of export channels in a closely monitored fashion.

Information to be found on the Know Before You Grow website includes:

- The National Corn Growers Association stands solidly true to its policy in maintaining all new events must have approval in the United States and Japan prior to release. Additionally, the trait provider must be actively pursuing approval in all other markets for U.S. corn.
- In the 2012/2013 marketing year, exports to China represented 0.8 percent of the total U.S. corn supply. As specific issues have arisen from the release of Agrisure Duracade, which currently is not approved in China or the European Union, NCGA reminds growers that corn used in ethanol production also often enters export streams as distillers dried grains. DDGS are a valuable feed ingredient gaining popularity in China and other export markets.
- Corn growers are urged to examine the traits approved in export markets prior to planting. With current gaps in trait approvals abroad, farmers should make well-informed planting decisions to avoid potentially difficult situations should elevators again decide not to accept corn with these traits at harvest.
- Growers should read their grower agreements before planting and communicate with their grain buyers. This is why NCGA works with technology providers to publicize regular updates on the approval status of these events. Regardless of export status, there is an ample market for U.S. biotech corn.

To learn more, visit Know Before You Grow, ncga.com/for-farmers/know-before-you-grow.