

Executive Summary

Legal Petition Seeking an Environmental Impact Statement Concerning the Deregulation of Genetically Engineered Wheat Varieties & Petition Seeking the Listing of Genetically Engineered Wheat Varieties as Noxious Weeds

The United States is a major wheat producing country, with output exceeded only by China, the European Union, and sometimes India. In 1999, wheat ranked third (behind corn and soybeans) among U.S. field crops in both planted acreage and gross farm receipts¹. The U.S. is the world's leading wheat exporter². Wheat amounts to approximately 7.5% of all U.S. agricultural export value³. On December 19, 2002, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) received a petition from Monsanto to allow the commercialization of herbicide resistant wheat. As the USDA itself has stated, "Development of genetically modified, herbicide tolerant wheat varieties promises significant benefits to spring wheat growers, but may also introduce some uncertainty in marketing."⁴

On March 11, 2003, several non-profit organizations representing the interests of wheat farmers in the Northern Plains and individual wheat farmers filed a legal petition with the USDA requesting that the agency deny the Monsanto commercialization petition until the federal government has fully analyzed the potential economic and environmental impacts associated with the widespread commercialization of genetically engineered wheat. Among the organizations and individuals petitioning the USDA are: Dakota Resource Council, North Dakota State Senator April Fairfield, National Family Farm Coalition, the Northern Plains Resource Council, Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society, Montana State Senator Jon Tester and the Western Organization of Resources Councils.