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Judge Halts Sale and Planting of GM Alfalfa

MEDIA STATEMENT: March 12, 2007

In a decision on March 12, 2007, Judge Charles R. Breyer of the Federal District Court in San Francisco issued a temporary injunction to stopping immediately sales of genetically modified (GM) alfalfa and calling for a March 30 halt in planting by farmers who have already purchased their seed. Last month, Judge Breyer ruled that the U.S. Department of Agriculture had failed to adequately evaluate the potential environmental and economic impacts of GM alfalfa.

Blaine Schmaltz for WORC and the Dakota Resource Council

- The Western Organization of Resource Councils and Dakota Resource Council welcome the moratorium and hope the judge stops the planting and sale of genetically modified alfalfa until the U.S. Department of Agriculture thoroughly examines the public health, environmental, and economic consequences of the commercial release of this crop.
- Introduction of GM alfalfa has already cost me business. I've abandoned my food grade sprouting business, stopped selling alfalfa seed to organic farmers, and ended sales to some foreign markets that would have required expensive testing.
- The USDA must consider the costs of genetic contamination to growers of organic and conventional alfalfa, the costs to meat and milk producers who don't want to feed GM alfalfa to their livestock, and the loss of choice for consumers who want meat and dairy products raised without GM feed.

Blaine Schmaltz, Rugby, N.D., is a seed grower, organic farmer, and co-plaintiff in the case. He is a member of the Dakota Resource Council. The Dakota Resource Council is a member of WORC. WORC is a network representing farmers, ranchers, and consumers in Colorado, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, and Wyoming.