

**WORC statement on release of Final Environmental Impact Statement on
genetically modified alfalfa by USDA**

Source: Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC), December 16, 2010

Billings, Mont. – Please attribute the following statement to Todd Leake, a farmer from Emerado, N.D., and WORC spokesperson.

“We’re pleased that U.S. Department of Agriculture is considering a new option which would place some limits on the planting of genetically modified alfalfa. USDA has finally recognized that contamination from genetically engineered crops unfairly damages farmers who grow organic crops or conventional crops for markets demanding GM free production. USDA has also acknowledged, for the first time, that the spread of glyphosate-resistant weeds, hastened by widespread planting of crops genetically modified to resist glyphosate, can also harm conventional and organic farmers.

However, it is not clear whether it is possible to prevent contamination of conventional and organic alfalfa or the spread of glyphosate resistant weeds entirely through geographical restrictions and isolation distance requirements for genetically modified alfalfa. We are skeptical that this option would truly limit harm to the environment or prevent contamination of organic and conventional alfalfa.

The livelihoods of family farmers are at stake, and that should be reflected in any economic analysis in the environmental impact statement. The consensus of the scientific community is that if genetically modified crops are deregulated and commercialized, contamination of non-genetically modified crops of the same species is inevitable, and beyond the tolerances of our export customers. These importation protocol tolerances have been in place for over a decade and there seems to be no substantive changes in genetically modified organism policy by the European Union, Pacific Rim, or other countries, concerning genetic modified organism specifications by importers, millers, food manufacturers or preferences of consumers. Until such policies and preferences change, USDA must not sabotage the essential export markets U.S. farmers need to receive a profitable price in the global marketplace.”

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