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**national farmers union**  
*In Union Is Strength*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FEBRUARY 24, 2003**

**FARMERS SHOULD USE MARKET POWER TO STOP GM WHEAT**

**SASKATOON, Sask.**—At a new conference in Saskatoon today, the NFU urged farmers:

***IF YOU DON'T WANT GM WHEAT  
DON'T BUY ROUNDUP***

Monsanto wants government approval to introduce its genetically-modified (GM) wheat. Monsanto's GM wheat is glyphosate resistant or "Roundup Ready"—designed to be used with Monsanto's Roundup or another glyphosate herbicide.

The international customers that buy 82% of Canada's wheat crop have said that they will stop buying if Canada introduces GM wheat. In December 2002, Monsanto pushed ahead with regulatory approval for GM wheat in Canada. The vast majority of farmers do not want Monsanto to introduce GM wheat.

To stop GM wheat, the NFU is urging farmers to utilize a commercial communications strategy. "Buying glyphosate from another company will send a powerful market signal to Monsanto," said NFU President Stewart Wells. "Farmers should rise to this challenge and use their market power to change Monsanto's decision to force GM wheat onto the market."

"Farmers can't trust government to regulate the introduction of GM wheat—governments are too busy promoting the GM food industry. If farmers want to keep GM wheat out of our fields, if we want to protect our foreign markets, we need to take direct action" said Wells.

Roundup™ is Monsanto's brand-name for the herbicide glyphosate. Farmers have choices when purchasing glyphosate—many companies sell a glyphosate herbicide (see background). "Because there are alternative products, farmers can easily switch brands," said Wells.

Monsanto lost over \$2.5 billion [Cdn.\$] in 2002. It attributed a significant portion of that loss to reduced Roundup sales. "Monsanto is sensitive to changes in Roundup sales. If farmers affect Monsanto's bottom line and shareholders' profits, farmers can reverse Monsanto's decision to force GM wheat onto the market," said Wells.

NFU member and Lancer-area farmer Ron Watson and NFU member and Swift Current-area farmer Lyle Simonson joined Wells at the news conference today in Saskatoon.

The NFU and other organizations will hold 11 town-hall meetings across western Canada beginning February 26. At those meetings, experts will explain the costs of GM wheat to farmers. As part of a multi-pronged strategy to stop GM wheat, the NFU will urge farmers to consider their own self-interests when making glyphosate purchase decisions.

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## BACKGROUND TO THE NFU'S FEBRUARY 24 NEWS RELEASE

### What are the alternatives to Roundup?

In addition to Monsanto's Roundup, six companies make glyphosate products registered for use in Canada. These products include:

Credit (Nufarm), Factor (IPCO), Glyphos (Cheminova), Maverick (Dow), Touchdown (Syngenta), Vantage (Dow), Victor (Bayer)

Dow's Vantage products and Syngenta's Touchdown product are registered for use "incrop" on Monsanto's Roundup Ready canola and other Roundup Ready crops.

### What are the costs of genetically-modified (GM) wheat?

Numerous costs will result from the introduction of GM wheat, including:

- **Market loss** Many of Canada's highest-paying foreign customers have said they will stop buying Canadian wheat if we introduce GM varieties.
- **Agronomic costs** To control GM Roundup Ready wheat in GM Roundup Ready canola (and vice versa) will require additional chemical applications totalling up to \$400 million per year for Canada's 20 million direct-seeded acres.
- **Segregation costs** A segregation system based on a 1% tolerance (about the level that some European countries are contemplating) may cost up to \$40/tonne (See below).
- **Segregation-failure costs** If a segregation system is tried and fails (if key customers receive contaminated wheat), farmers could permanently lose market premiums worth hundreds-of-millions of dollars per year.
- **Seed and technology costs** Monsanto charges farmers a \$15 per acre "technology use fee" for GM Roundup Ready canola. GM wheat will come with similar costs.

Cost/benefit analyses by independent economists Furtan, Gray, and Holzman of the University of Saskatchewan show that farmers' net incomes will fall if Monsanto introduces GM Roundup Ready wheat: the costs far outweigh the benefits.

### Can we segregate GM wheat from non-GM?

Monsanto and others advocate a segregation system to deal with market rejection. Segregation systems will not work, however, because the wheat seed supply will quickly become contaminated and unreliable, and because our bulk handling system is ill-equipped to segregate GM and non-GM wheat.

Tests on canola shows that most "non-GM" certified seed is contaminated by GM varieties. The wheat seed supply will become similarly contaminated. With contaminated seed, it becomes very difficult to run a segregation system. If Monsanto introduces GM wheat, there will be no such thing as non-GM wheat, merely wheat with varying levels of contamination.

Our grain handling system is ill-suited to segregate GM wheat from non-GM. Our system is increasingly designed for bulk handling, high-throughput, and 100-railcar shipping. It currently has thousands of points of entry where grain could be mis-represented, mixed, contaminated, mis-labelled, or mis-directed.

Just one or two mistakes—just one or two instances of delivering contaminated wheat to customers who demand GM-free wheat—could cost Canada its reputation for grain quality and, thus, reduce all wheat farmers' incomes by hundreds-of-millions of dollars per year. Further, many customers have said that if Canada introduces GM varieties, they will stop buying Canadian wheat, regardless of whether we try to segregate or not.