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**national farmers union**

***In Union Is Strength***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MAY 15, 2009**

**THERE IS NO DEMAND BY FARMERS FOR GENETICALLY-MODIFIED WHEAT**

The overwhelming majority of farmers in Canada are still opposed to the introduction of Genetically-Modified (GM) wheat, says Stewart Wells, President of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

A recent statement by the National Association of Wheat Growers in the United States and the Western Canadian Wheat Growers calling for commercialization of GM wheat is not representative of farmers. “These commodity organizations don’t speak for the majority of producers,” stated Wells. “As long as companies like Monsanto have two nickels to rub together they will always be able to find groups that will lobby for their interests, however.”

Pressure to commercialize GM wheat is coming from a handful of multinational biotechnology corporations, including Monsanto, which dominate global markets for seeds and chemicals. Monsanto first announced its plans to commercialize GM wheat in 2001, but resistance from farmers over the intervening years forced the company to back off. Farmers are opposed to GM wheat for a number of reasons, including:

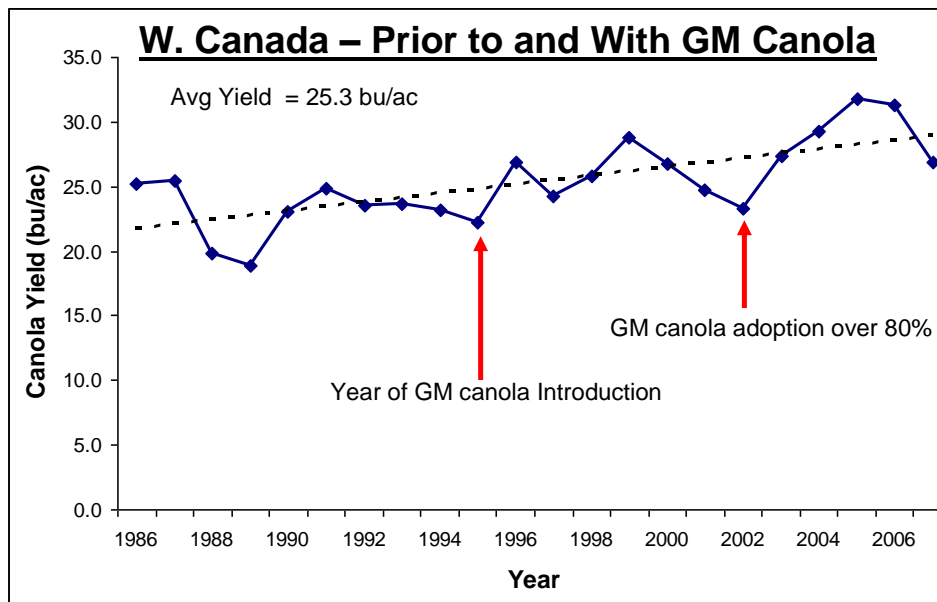
1. Loss of markets;
2. Increased agronomic costs;
3. Loss of farmers’ ability to save and re-use seed;
4. Destruction of organic wheat production due to contamination by GM varieties;

Wells said international customers that buy 82% of Canada’s wheat crop have stated that they will stop buying if Canada introduces GM wheat. “GM wheat will kill markets,” he said. “Customers have indicated clearly they will stop buying all wheat from us: GM and non-GM alike.”

The introduction of GM wheat will inevitably lead to contamination in the production and handling systems, stated Wells. This would be disastrous for the growing organic wheat industry because segregation is virtually impossible. “There is no organic canola grown in Canada because of widespread contamination from GM canola,” he pointed out. “This has caused irreparable harm to organic growers.”

The commodity organizations advocating the commercialization of GM wheat claim that one of the biggest benefits will be increased yields. However, there is no data to support the contention that GM varieties dramatically boost crop yields. He noted that for twenty years, from 1986 to 2006, while there has been a steady increase in average canola yields, the introduction of GM varieties in 1996 did not alter the overall trend.

Research on canola yields by Rene Van Acker, Professor and Chair of the Department of Plant Agriculture at the University of Guelph, illustrates this fact. Van Acker presented evidence at the NFU Ontario regional meeting in April, 2009, showing that the introduction and widespread adoption of GM canola varieties did not significantly change the overall trend in canola yield in western Canada. Yield increases are as likely or more likely to be achieved through conventional plant breeding and hybridization techniques.



(Source: Professor Rene Van Acker, University of Guelph, Plant Agriculture Department)

Another major concern for farmers is the increased agronomic costs as a result of seed variety contracts and technology use agreements that are part and parcel of GM varieties. In addition, there is a lack of research on the long-term health and environmental impact of GM varieties.