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(March 28, 2014, North Bay, ON)- The National Farmers Union (NFU) is pleased to learn that Forage Genetics International (FGI) has decided not to begin selling herbicide-tolerant genetically modified (GM) alfalfa this spring. The company's decision to delay the introduction of GM alfalfa into Canada was confirmed in the March 27 edition of *The Western Producer* and is consistent with recent statements made by seed companies in Quebec and Ontario. In 2013, without public input or notification, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) granted registration to several varieties of GM Roundup Ready alfalfa, which means FGI and their distributors could legally sell the herbicide-tolerant GM alfalfa across Canada.

Ontario grass-fed beef farmer and NFU member, Dave Lewington said, "By deciding not to sell GM alfalfa in Canada for spring planting, FGI is, at some level, admitting that the concerns of farmers across Canada are serious. It is unfortunate that our own government has failed to acknowledge the severe economic impact that the commercial release of GM alfalfa would have on Canadian farmers."

In 2013, Lewington and another Ontario farmer and fellow NFU member requested a full environmental assessment of GM Roundup Ready alfalfa under Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights. Their application stated that the public interest was not served by the federal process for approving GM crops, nor by the variety registration process. In their application, the two farmers detailed the gaps in the federal approval process for GM crops, pointing out that it does not consider the social and economic consequences of releasing crops such as Roundup Ready alfalfa and that the whole process takes place behind closed doors.

"FGI's decision for this year is the right decision. Even so, NFU members will continue to pressure both industry and the government to stop the release of GM alfalfa," said Jan Slomp, NFU President and Alberta dairy farmer. "The federal government should de-register all varieties of RR alfalfa. Before approving any more GM crops, the government must revamp its process so that it conducts a full assessment of the environmental, economic and social impacts based on public research and input from a cross-section of farmers and Canadians, rather than simply relying on information provided by the seed companies seeking regulatory approval for their products."

Company right to not release GM alfalfa this spring, says NFU

Posted by Joan Russow

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