



CANADIAN CORN PEST COALITION

LA COALITION CANADIENNE CONTRE LES RAVAGEURS DU MAÏS

Refuge compliance slipping – Immediate action required by Canadian corn industry

(Ottawa, February 16, 2010) - At their national annual meeting held in Ottawa February 16, 2010, the Canadian Corn Pest Coalition (CCPC) reviewed voluntarily-collected industry-survey data, and concluded that the corn industry across Canada is slipping significantly in its diligence to comply with the requirement of including a non-*Bt* refuge when planting *Bt* corn. Compliance levels that were up as high as 80% in 2005 have now dropped to 61% in 2009.

The unique refuge requirements for each *Bt* corn technology are a critical component to the sustainability and stewardship of *Bt* corn. The refuge requirements were mandated after careful consideration by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and supported by the CCPC to prevent insects from developing resistance to the *Bt* proteins.

The CCPC is a national think tank and advisory group comprised of public academics and scientists, corn producer organizations, provincial extension specialists, federal government researchers and seed industry stakeholders. The CFIA regularly consults and works closely with the CCPC to address issues and communications around the stewardship of *Bt* corn technology.

“The recent decline in refuge compliance by some Canadian farmers is very concerning to the CCPC and to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency,” says Dr. Art Schaafsma, Chair, Canadian Corn Pest Coalition. “We call on the corn industry across Canada to do the right thing and promote the planting of a proper refuge to minimize the risk of insects developing resistance.” Schaafsma also notes that should the insects become resistant, these plant pests could become increasingly detrimental to crop yields in several crops as there would be fewer options to control their populations in either conventional or organic cropping systems. The potential for shifting pest status is a key area of emphasis for the CFIA in the regulation of novel plant traits.

“These technologies are approved by the CFIA on condition that technology providers (seed companies) ensure that users maintain proper refuge area and configuration on farms,” says Schaafsma. “Continued non-compliance in terms of the use of refuge could result in the availabilities of these technologies being put at risk. We cannot afford to lose *Bt* corn technology because of misuse.” Technology providers have been requested by CFIA to develop and implement corrective action plans to get farm compliance back to acceptable levels; and the corn industry can expect increased scrutiny by technology providers and the CFIA on refuge compliance down to the farm field level.

As more *Bt* traits become available trait-specific refugia may be required and these are not always the same. Always check with the technology provider for the correct refuge to use. In no instances are there any approved technologies with refuge included in the bag and mixing non-*Bt* with *Bt* seed is prohibited.

For more information about insect resistance management and *Bt* corn visit the CCPC website at www.cornpest.ca.

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