



FLAX COUNCIL OF CANADA

GMO Flax Update 28 September 2009

Corrected

The Flax Council of Canada will be issuing regular GMO Flax Updates to keep producers and industry informed on the actions being taken to resolve the current GMO flax issue. The notices are posted on the Flax Council of Canada's web page: www.flaxcouncil.ca. Further information can be obtained by contacting Barry Hall, President, Flax Council of Canada at flax@flaxcouncil.ca

Issue:

- GMO material has been discovered in Canadian flax shipments to Europe
- Europe has not authorized any GMO flax events
- Europe has a zero tolerance policy for events not authorized in Europe
- Most Canadian flax in Europe is currently quarantined
- European laboratories claim the GMO material is FP967, commonly known as Triffid
- Triffid cannot be confirmed until an event specific test for Triffid has been developed and proven

Problem:

- Zero tolerance of unauthorized events in countries of import creates unnecessary and dramatic increases in consumer costs, reductions in producer prices and prevention of consumer access to critical supplies. This results when safe technologies are met with zero tolerances due to a lack of official authorizations
- Once an event is authorized in country of export it is only a matter of time before trace levels of the event will appear in international shipments through commingling within international shipping systems
- This unintentional commingling may occur with the seed, on the farm, or within the global handling and transportation systems as the grain is produced and moved between buyers and sellers
- Therefore the presence of GMO material will occur in all transboundary shipments of all commodities (both GMOs and Non-GMOs) shipped from countries with GMOs in commercial production
- European zero tolerance policies have also placed US soybean shipments in quarantine because of trace levels of unauthorized GMO events discovered from corn dust in the shipments
- No bulk handling system, no identity preserved system, no channeling system can manage these events to zero tolerance
- Today's tests can detect the presence of GM material in one in 10,000 seeds

Canadian GMO Flax Background

- In the late 1980's a flax variety, known as FP967 and later named Triffid was developed by a public research institution, the Crop Development Centre in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
- Triffid underwent full food, feed and environmental risk assessment analysis and was approved and authorized by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)
- Triffid underwent full food, feed and environmental risk assessment analysis and was approved and authorized in the United States
- Triffid certified seed was never sold to produce flax for food, feed or for processing
- The Flax Council of Canada, in one of the most sophisticated and extensive risk management plans ever adopted, acquired all known quantities of certified seeds basis available CSGA and grower records and had it destroyed or crushed domestically
- The Flax Council's actions were taken to protect the European market by ensuring that no GMO flax was being produced in Canada
- Triffid was de-registered by CFIA in 2001
- The recent discovery of GMO markers is the first occasion where GMO material has been found in Canadian flax shipments

Highlights of Flax Council Actions to Address European GMO Flax Issue

- The CFIA has confirmed that Triffid flax is safe for food, feed and processing
- The Flax Council considers the GMO flax issue to be a very serious issue and has placed the resumption of flax trade to Europe as its highest priority
- Europe represents about 70% of Canada's flax exports
- The Flax Council has created a Flax Risk Management Team and a number of Working Groups that are working closely with the Canadian Government to develop a specific test for the identification of CDC Triffid, to identify source/s of the GMO marker in the Canadian flax crop and to establish a plan for its removal
- The Plant Biotechnology Institute (PBI) in Saskatoon is developing a Triffid specific test, which when developed, will be sent to GM monitoring labs in Europe as designated by the European Governments in consultation with the Canadian Government.
- The CFIA is testing certified flax seed stock. To date no positive GMO results have been found
- The Canadian Grain Commission is undertaking a geographic study of existing flax stocks held in commercial positions throughout Canada. All Canadian companies are participating in the study and are sending appropriate samples from their facilities
- The Commission study will determine the nature and location of the GMO material

Canadian Government/European Commission Talks

- Canadian Government officials are working with officials in DG SANCO (Department of Health) of the European Commission

Flax Council Next Steps

- Issue GMO Flax Updates and post them on its web page on a regular basis to keep industry abreast of recent developments
- Encourage Canadian Government to recommend to DG Sanco that a common protocol for the determination of Triffid be developed jointly by Canada's Plant Biotechnology Institute (PBI) and the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC)

- Work with the Canadian Government to develop a Flax Protocol to resume flax trade with the European Union
- Work with CFIA and Canadian Grain Commission to determine the nature and scope of the GM material
- Implement appropriate risk management policies when the scope and nature of the GM material is known

Summary

- **The GMO flax issue is a serious problem that is causing significant financial hardship to both Canadian producers and industry and European industry and consumers**
- **The Flax Council encourages the European Union countries to help re-establish flax trade between Canada and Europe by creating a technical solution**
- **Canadian flax remains safe for food, feed and processing**
- **This is a regulatory issue, not a safety issue**
- **Once the nature and scope of the GM material is known the Flax Council will work with the Government of Canada to develop a risk management plan to meet European requirements**