



FLAX COUNCIL OF CANADA

GMO Flax Update 30th October 2009

Announcement

- Canada and the EU have endorsed on Thursday 29th October the Flax Protocol developed by the Canadian Government in consultation with the Flax Council of Canada, Canadian flax exporters and DG Sanco of the European Commission.
- The Protocol describes the system of sampling, testing and documentation pertaining to the presence of CDC Triffid in shipments of Canadian flaxseed to the European Union.

Background

- In July 2009 a commercial laboratory in the EU detected a low level presence of genetically modified (GM) material in a shipment of Canadian flaxseed to the EU. In September 2009 the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) confirmed a trace amount of GM material in some Canadian flaxseed shipments.
- No varieties of GM flaxseed have received regulatory approvals in the EU. EU regulations require zero tolerance of non-approved GM events
- There are currently no varieties of GM flaxseed registered in Canada. FP967, a GM flaxseed variety commonly known as CDC Triffid, received regulatory feed and environmental safety authorizations in 1996, and food safety authorizations in 1998, but was never released for commercial production.
- The Crop Development Centre of the University of Saskatchewan (CDC) developed Triffid which is tolerant to soil residues of certain herbicides.
- This variety Triffid was never marketed as seed for commercial crop production in Canada. Triffid was voluntarily de-registered in 2001 on the basis of market access concerns with the EU. It was believed that all Triffid seed was removed from the marketplace.
- Triffid has received regulatory approvals for food, feed and the environment in both Canada and the United States.

- Canadian flax remains safe for food, feed and processing.
- This is a regulatory issue, not a safety issue.

Next Steps

- Canadian Food Inspection Agency to continue to test commercial seed samples.
- Canadian Grain Commission to continue testing to determine the presence of Triffid within the Canadian flaxseed supply.
- Validation of laboratories to be eligible to perform test requirements:
 - On farm samples
 - Commercial storage samples
 - Rail car samples
- Once laboratories have been validated, testing of samples will begin with priority being given to selection of Triffid free material for shipment of flax to Europe.
- The Flax Council of Canada and the Government of Canada will be working in a collaborative manner with our producers to identify stocks of Triffid and take steps to ensure that these stocks are removed from the system.

Resumption of Trade

- The Flax Council of Canada is hopeful that laboratories will be validated and that sufficient testing can be conducted to minimize the risk of positive tests in time for shipments of flax to resume to Europe before the close of navigation this year.
- Canada's objective through the implementation of the Flax Protocol is to meet strict EU import requirements and to allow for a secure and predictable supply of flaxseed to Europe.
- The Flax Council emphasizes that further import testing by EU Member States (following export certification) may impose additional risk to Canadian and European industry, causing exporters to possibly reconsider shipping to those respective export markets.
- In order to ensure quick resolution and to avoid further trade disruptions, it is essential that Member States support this approach expeditiously.