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Genetically Engineered Cotton Growers Want Unlicensed Pesticide Use on 3 Million Acres Beyond Pesticides Asks EPA to Reject Emergency Request, Citing Hazards and Failed GMO Crop System

July 2, 2014, Washington, DC - A public interest group, representing environmental, public health, and organic farm interests, has asked the U.S. Environmental Protection (EPA) to deny an emergency request by Texas cotton growers to use a controversial pesticide on genetically engineered (GE) cotton to control weeds that are now resistant to the chemical they have been using, Roundup (glyphosate). Approximately 90% of cotton grown in Texas is genetically engineered or known as a genetically modified organism (GMO). The request, which comes through the Texas Department of Agriculture, seeks an allowance on 3 million acres for the highly toxic pesticide propazine, not registered for use on cotton.

“In the true sense, this is not an emergency because the weed resistance is predictable since it has been known for many years that GE cotton sprayed with the weedkiller glyphosate (Roundup) would create resistant superweeds,” said Jay Feldman, executive director of Beyond Pesticides, which filed comments opposing emergency status for propazine use. “It is an abuse of the law for EPA to prop up failed GE cropping systems with toxic chemicals when the crop can be grown with organic methods not reliant on toxic pesticides and just as productive and profitable,” he said. Beyond Pesticides opposes 2,4-D tolerant cotton that GE cotton growers are expecting to be available in a year because of the human and environmental hazards, expected increased 2,4-D use, followed by predictable weed resistance.

Propazine is a toxic herbicide in the triazine class of chemicals that has been linked to developmental and reproductive toxicity. Another triazine herbicide, atrazine is linked to birth defects, increases the risk for mammary cancer, and has been shown to demasculinize frogs by disrupting the endocrine system. There is concern that increased use of another member of the toxic triazine chemical family presents unacceptable human and environmental health hazards.

The triazines are highly soluble in water and are the most frequently detected pesticides found at concentrations at or above one or more benchmarks in over half of sites sampled. Increasing propazine use on over 3 million acres in Texas will undoubtedly increase propazine movement into waterways, potentially threatening the safety of Texas’ surface and drinking water.

See comments at <http://bit.ly/PropazineS18>.

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