

Press Release Source: Monsanto Company

EPA Approves Natural Refuge for Bollgard II Cotton

Monday June 4, 12:03 pm ET

ST. LOUIS, June 4 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Monsanto Company (NYSE: MON - News) announced today that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved a natural refuge option for its Bollgard II insect-protected cotton planted from Texas east, excluding some Texas counties. Now cotton producers in these eligible regions can take advantage of non-cotton crops and other plants as a refuge for certain pests and will not be required to plant a non-Bt cotton refuge for Bollgard II cotton. A structured, non-Bt cotton refuge continues to be required as part of an insect resistance management (IRM) program for Bollgard cotton in all states, and for Bollgard II cotton planted outside eligible areas.

“This is great news for U.S. cotton producers in eligible regions who choose to plant Bollgard II cotton,” said Walt Mullins, Monsanto technology development manager. “It allows them to simplify their pest control program by using advanced cotton technology with the built-in IRM mechanism of two effective Bt genes. Bollgard II cotton also provides the most effective built-in worm control technology available for most leaf- and boll-feeding worm species.”

The ability for cotton growers in eligible regions to plant Bollgard II cotton without a non-Bt cotton refuge should enable increased cotton lint yields by eliminating the yield losses associated with planting non-Bt cotton refuge acres.

Bollgard II cotton is the second generation of insect-protected cotton developed by Monsanto; it produces two different insect-control proteins compared with the single insect-control protein in its predecessor, Bollgard cotton. Bollgard II cotton produces both the Cry2Ab2 and Cry1Ac proteins. Each protein provides control of cotton bollworm and tobacco budworm, which gives Bollgard II cotton dual efficacy for both pests. The two-protein system also increases the durability of cotton varieties against the development of insect resistance compared with the single-protein Bollgard cotton product.

Monsanto requested a natural refuge for Bollgard II cotton after collecting extensive scientific data to show that a sufficient number of cotton bollworms and tobacco budworms—key insect pests that are controlled by Bollgard II cotton—are present on non-cotton crops and other plants. The natural presence of these pests outside of cotton, combined with the dual efficacy of Bollgard II cotton, greatly reduces the chance that these pests will develop resistance to Bollgard II cotton.

Eligible regions

The natural refuge option applies to Bollgard II cotton planted in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas (excluding the following counties: Brewster, Crane, Crockett, Culberson, El Paso, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Loving, Pecos, Presidio, Reeves, Terrell, Val Verde, Ward, and Winkler), and Virginia. States and counties where the natural refuge option is not available are areas where pink bollworm is a significant pest. Data submitted to EPA by Monsanto supported a natural refuge option in areas where cotton bollworm and tobacco budworm are the primary worm pests for cotton.

It is important to note that the EPA previously established prohibitions on the planting of Bt cotton in the Texas Panhandle counties of Carson, Dallam, Hansford, Hartley, Hutchinson, Lipscomb, Moore, Ochiltree, Roberts and Sherman as well as south of Highway 60 in Florida. These restrictions do not change with the approval of natural refuge for Bollgard II cotton.

Additionally, cotton producers who plant Bollgard cotton must continue to plant a structured refuge of five percent unsprayed or 20 percent sprayed non- Bt cotton as required by IRM rules and specified in their technology use agreements. Similarly, cotton producers who plant Bollgard II cotton outside of regions eligible for the natural refuge option, must also plant a non Bt cotton refuge. Failure to comply with these requirements can result in the loss of access to the technology.

Cotton farmers first planted Bollgard cotton in 1996. Bollgard II cotton varieties have been on the market since 2003. Monsanto licenses both traits to cottonseed companies to use in leading cotton varieties. The cottonseed industry is in the process of transitioning cottonseed varieties to Bollgard II cotton technology. The process will be completed by the 2010 season, since the EPA registration for Bollgard cotton expires after the 2009 cotton-growing season.

Monsanto Company is a leading global provider of technology-based solutions and agricultural products that improve farm productivity and food quality. For more information on Monsanto and biotechnology, see: <http://www.monsanto.com>.

Note to editors: Bollgard, Bollgard II, and Roundup Ready are registered trademarks of Monsanto Technology LLC.

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