DELAWARE VALLEY COLLEGE

2013 USDA AG OUTLOOK FORUM

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Chair – Advisory Committee on Biotechnology & 21st Century Agriculture (AC21)

- Genetically Engineered Organisms: Trade and Domestic Use

Topic: Future and current trade and domestic related topics of biotech production

4 Objectives:

1. Provide context on AC21 and the role it serves
2. Overview of the work AC21 has done
3. Highlights of USDA planned actions on recommendations
4. Impacts and implications

AC21 Charter

"The USDA encourages and supports the responsible development and utilization of beneficial new agricultural products, including those produced through biotechnology, and assures the safety of new products with science based regulatory approach….. These topics are complex and of crucial concern in the conduct of agricultural biotechnology research, regulation and commercialization."

AC21 Bylaws

1. To examine long-term impacts of biotechnology on U.S. food and agriculture systems and USDA.
2. To provide guidance to USDA on pressing individual issues, identified by the Secretary, related to the application of biotechnology in agriculture.

Builds on previous reports and good work of AC21

- “Preparing for the Future”
- “Global Traceability and Labeling Agreements for Agriculture Biotechnology – Devised Products: Impacts and Implications”
- “Opportunities and Challenges in Agriculture and Biotechnology: The Decade Ahead”
- “What issues should the USDA consider regarding coexistence among diverse agriculture systems in a Dynamic and Complex marketplace?”

Committee Charge from the Office of the Secretary

1. What types of compensation mechanisms, if any, would be appropriate to address economic losses by famers in which the value of their crops is reduced by unintended presence of genetically engineered material(s)?
2. What would be necessary to implement? That is, what would be the eligibility standards for a loss and what tools and triggers (e.g. tolerance, testing protocols, etc.) would be needed to verify and measure such losses and determine if claims are compensable?
3. In addition to above, what other actions would be appropriate to bolster or facilitate coexistence among different agricultural production systems in the United States?

“Enhancing Coexistence: A Report of the AC21 to the Secretary of Agriculture”

Overarching issue – With the growing complexity and diversity of U.S. agriculture, how do we enhance coexistence between different forms of agriculture production?

Background and Context

- Coexistence is not a new practice in agriculture, nor has it failed in recent times.
- Farmers have the right to make the best production choices for their farms – organic, GE crops, IP, non-GE and new functional traits.
- Important that every farmer show respect for their neighbor's ability to make a different production choice.
- All participants in the development, breeding, marketing and management of crop production need to be involved in making co-existence work.

- The number and scope of opportunities for differentiated products and markets have increased and mechanisms for precisely evaluating the composition of products have become widely used in the market.
- The best situation is where good stewardship leads to effective coexistence.
- Prevention of the problem is preferable to dealing with negative consequences downstream, either on farm or in the marketplace.

Package of Recommendations for USDA consideration

1. Educate farmers and other in the food and feed production chain about coexistence and the importance of coexistence and their roles, particularly with reference to stewardship, contracting and attention to gene flow.
2. Provide farmers with tools and incentives to promote coexistence through its farm programs and coordination with other entities.

3. Conduct research in a range of areas that are integral to understanding the current state of coexistence and gene flow management, as well the development of improved tools and practices to manage coexistence in the future.
4. Provide increased assurance about the quality and diversity of U.S. seed and germplasm resources.
5. Provide a framework for the establishment of a system of compensation for actual economic losses for farmers intending to grow identity-preserved products, if the Sec. determines loss data justifies such a step.

Impacts and Implications of the Committee's Report

- What does it mean to U.S. agriculture?
  - Advances the conversation about how we manage the increasingly complex landscape.
  - Enhances the neighbor-to-neighbor relations, contact, respect and accountability.
  - Allows farmers to place their energies and resources into productive activities and helps maintain positive views of American agriculture.
  - Provides incentives to develop joint coexistence plans.

- Spawns creative policy discussions about how to use public and/or private investments to achieve multiple goals important to farmers and consumers.
- Helps to maintain the integrity of products and confidence of consumers (domestic and global).
- Helps minimize disruptions to functioning markets at home and abroad.
- Demonstrates that coexistence is a shared responsibility and a core principal of production agriculture in the 21st century

HIGHLIGHTS OF USDA PLANNED ACTIONS TO ADDRESS AC21 RECOMMENDATIONS

Research Efforts

- Help secure data on economic losses;
- Unintended GE presence in commercial non-GE seed supplies intended for identity-preserved production;
- Actuarial soundness of potential compensation mechanisms;
- Assess mitigation techniques to minimize gene flow;
- Evaluate the efficacy of best practices needed to develop standards for joint coexistence plans and determine what additional research is needed; and
- Continue to involve scientific community.

Outreach Efforts

- Foster communication and collaboration to strengthen coexistence.
- Use case studies to understand challenges faced by producers.
- Partner with the seed industry on complementary educational or marketing material on available stewardship tools and farmer-to-farmer communication that might accompany seed sales.

POTENTIAL COMPENSATION MECHANISMS

- Work with Federal Crop Insurance Program to explore changes to organic crop coverage .

SEED QUALITY

- Use the National Genetic Resources Advisory Council to evaluate the availability of non-GE seed for producers serving GE-sensitive markets.
- Evaluate how USDA may help to strengthen the Organic Seed Finders database.
- Review and evaluate current practices for testing, monitoring and maintaining the purity of publicly held germplasm; as needed, plan for updating and strengthening those practices.

SUMMARY

- Coexistence is about finding solutions not differences.
- Agricultural production is complex and will continue to grow in complexity
- Progress

THANK YOU

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