

National  
Grain and Feed  
Association



North American  
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## **NGFA, NAEGA Urge U.S. to Retain Regulation of ‘Low-Risk’ Experimental Biotech Crops**

WASHINGTON – The nation’s two major grain trade organizations have urged the U.S. Department of Agriculture to retain stringent regulation of experimental biotech-enhanced crops for which full regulatory approval has not been granted “unless and until” global agreement is reached on a science-based policy governing the accidental (“adventitious”) presence of such “unapproved” commodities in food and feed.

The National Grain and Feed Association (NGFA) and North American Export Grain Association (NAEGA) submitted the statement in response to a request for comments by USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) on whether the agency should develop specific risk-based categories governing experimental field trials of biotech-enhanced commodities, including pharmaceutical or industrial crops not intended for use in food or feed. The agency also asked whether it should exempt certain “low-risk” categories of experimental biotech-enhanced crops from the agency’s permitting regulatory requirements.

Under the U.S. government’s current “coordinated framework” for regulating agricultural biotech-enhanced events, APHIS is responsible for issuing permits for experimental field trials of biotech-enhanced plants, and grants “non-regulated status” to biotech crops if the agency determines they do not pose an adverse risk to other plants, wildlife or the environment. Meanwhile, the Food and Drug Administration determines whether biotech-enhanced foods, feed and feed ingredients are safe for human and animal consumption, while the Environmental Protection Agency registers biotech-enhanced events that express their own pesticides and determines whether such products pose unreasonable adverse effects upon the environment.

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The NGFA and NAEGA stressed that U.S. law currently imposes a “zero tolerance” on the presence of in the commercial grain, feed and food system of biotech-enhanced commodities until and unless those commodities have received approval for use in food or feed from the U.S. government. Similar restrictions are imposed by foreign governments on U.S. exporters.

Further, the two organizations said they continue to support “stringent regulation” of biotech-enhanced grains and oilseeds designed to produce pharmaceutical or industrial compounds not intended for use in food or feed. Such regulation “should achieve strict separation of such crops from food and feed crops at all stages of production – from research (field trials) through commercialization,” the NGFA and NAEGA said. While conducting food and feed safety evaluation of such biotech-enhanced crops might improve domestic and international consumer confidence, the two groups said that the results of such tests should not have any bearing on the stringent level of regulation applied to biotech-enhanced crops with pharmaceutical or industrial properties unless such crops are deregulated by the U.S. government for use in the general commodity stream.

The NGFA and NAEGA also supported the development of a U.S. policy that would recognize other countries’ biotech regulatory-approval process for grains and oilseeds imported into the United States, provided that such processes are based on scientific risk-assessment principles and are transparent. “This would allow the United States to promote a policy of mutual recognition and harmonization of regulation of biotech-enhanced crops on a bilateral or multilateral basis with important trading partners and, eventually, on a global basis,” the two organizations said.

The NGFA, established in 1896, consists of 1,000 grain, feed, processing, exporting and other grain-related companies that operate about 5,000 facilities that handle more than two-thirds of all U.S. grains and oilseeds. The NGFA’s membership encompasses all sectors of the industry, including country, terminal and export elevators; feed manufacturers; cash grain and feed merchants; end users of grain and grain products, including processors, flour millers, and livestock and poultry integrators; commodity futures brokers and commission merchants; and allied industries. The NGFA also consists of 36 affiliated state and regional grain and feed associations, as well as two international affiliated associations.

NAEGA, established in 1912, is a not-for-profit trade association comprised of 35 private and publicly owned companies and farmer-owned cooperatives involved in and providing services to the bulk grain and oilseed exporting industry. NAEGA member companies ship practically all of the bulk grains and oilseeds exported each year from the United States.