

USDA-APHIS to Review Research for Determination of Non-Regulated Status for Ultra-Low Gossypol Cottonseed

Monday, January 22, 2018

From The Cotton Board

Cotton Incorporated-funded research into the suppression of gossypol in cottonseed is being reviewed by USDA-APHIS for a determination of non-regulated status for a specific type of ultra-low gossypol cottonseed (ULGCS) referred to as TAM66274. Cotton Incorporated has funded research at Texas A&M AgriLife Research of College Station on this technology because of its potential to enhance the use of protein contained in cottonseed, to enhance the value of cottonseed to producers, and to enhance the overall sustainability of cotton and cottonseed production. Texas A&M AgriLife Research of College Station submitted the request to USDA-APHIS in accordance with the agency's regulations.

USDA-APHIS issued a Federal Register notice seeking comments on this issue. The notice is at 82 F.R. 57426 and is available at the following link: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/12/05/2017-26155/texas-aandm-agrilife-research-availability-of-petition-for-determination-of-nonregulated-status-of>

George LaCour, Louisiana cotton producer and Chairman of The Cotton Board said, "Cotton Incorporated has been working on this technology for many years. Gossypol naturally occurs in cottonseed and limits its potential as animal feed. This technology could broaden the animal feed market for cottonseed."

According to Dr. Kater Hake, Vice President of Agricultural and Environmental Research at Cotton Incorporated, "the only difference between ULGCS and conventional cottonseed is the low gossypol level in the seed. ULGCS expands the opportunities for cottonseed in the food and feed sectors, without adversely affecting the quality or value of the fiber or other byproducts such as hulls and linters. Extensive field evaluations demonstrated that ULGCS poses no greater ecological risk than conventional cotton varieties."

USDA-APHIS will consider all comments received on or before February 5, 2018.

Farm, Trade Policy Experts Refute Critics in House Ag Committee Briefings

Friday, February 2, 2018

From Farm Policy Facts

Approximately 100 Hill staffers attended a pair of briefings this week that closely examined and debunked a number of farm policy criticisms leveled by the Heritage Foundation and other anti-farmer organizations.

The briefings, hosted by the House Agriculture Committee, featured policy experts, John Gilliland, an international trade consultant at Akin Gump Straus Hauer & Feld LLP, and Brandon Willis, the former head of the USDA's Risk Management Agency.

Both experts shared findings from their individual rebuttals to the Heritage Foundation's report, "Farms and Free Enterprise: A Blueprint for Agricultural Policy." In that report, Heritage argued that America should unilaterally eliminate its farm safety net, including crop insurance.

"The critics' conclusions are flawed; the prescriptions are even worse," Gilliland told attendees.

From a trade perspective, Gilliland said that a repeal of U.S. farm policies would be disastrous, as it would not only devastate the U.S. agricultural economy, but it would fail to convince our trading partners to open their markets and eliminate their subsidies and predatory trading practices.

He pointed out that the United States is already an open market with low tariffs on imported agricultural products. The simple average U.S. bound tariff rate is only 4.8%.

Meanwhile, tariffs and subsidies in other countries are much higher. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates U.S. support in 2015 to be 60% lower than Europe and 87% lower than China.

"They are spending more just as we are scaling down," Gilliland said.

Gilliland also noted that over the past two decades, Congress has enacted four Farm Bills, each taking steps toward more market-oriented policies.

"If you can find a way to distort a market you will see it in agriculture," Gilliland concluded. "Our farmers are having to deal with that. The best way to deal with it is at the negotiating table."

He noted the hypocrisy of critics who oppose multilateral approaches to bringing down trade barriers like Congressman Ted Yoho's (R-FL) "zero-for-zero" sugar policy, which seeks elimination of global sugar subsidies.

"It must be puzzling for U.S. sugar farmers that proponents of free trade would deride a zero-for-zero proposal that targets the elimination of domestic subsidies and tariffs," he said. "Is this not essentially what the Heritage Foundation proposes as the desirable outcome for all U.S. commodities?"

Willis was likewise puzzled by the attacks on America's farmers and ranchers.

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SAVE THE DATE!

April 5-6

Texas Cotton Ginners Association Annual Conference and Trade Show, Lubbock Memorial Civic Center

April 6

PCG Annual Meeting, LMCC

September 15

Celebrate Cotton Game, Texas Tech vs. Houston, Jones AT&T Stadium

In his presentation, Willis zeroed in on Heritage's cherry picked agriculture statistics — the same figures other anti-farm groups often highlight — which he says fail to capture the real challenges that American farmers and ranchers face.

For example, 60% of “farms” included in Heritage's estimate of farm income are retirees and individuals whose primary occupation is not farming. As a result, Heritage is grossly overstating farm income and the stability of that income, while grossly understating farm risk and the need that real “dirt-under-the-fingernail” farmers have for farm policy.

The tight margins that farmers face year in and year out was also discussed.

According to a handout distributed during the briefing, “[Farmers] make a profit less than 30% of the time.” It also noted that nearly 50% of mid-sized farms, and nearly 40% of large family farms, were deemed “high risk” by the USDA because of low profit margins.

Managing the economic pressures and unpredictable weather that farmers face requires risk management tools like crop insurance. And when it comes to crop insurance, Heritage, and other farm critics, fail to tell the whole story in their attempts to unilaterally disarm America's farmers and ranchers, Willis says.

He pointed out, for example, that critics were quick to complain about the cost of the 2012 drought, but ignored the fact that the disaster would have cost taxpayers \$3 billion more than crop insurance under an old-style disaster program.

“For midsize farmers, crop insurance is the difference between staying in business and going out of business,” Willis concluded.

To view Gilliland's report, click [here](http://bit.ly/GillilandReport) (<http://bit.ly/GillilandReport>). For Willis' report, click [here](http://bit.ly/WillisReport) (<http://bit.ly/WillisReport>).

Perdue Unveils Farmers.gov Interactive Website for Agricultural Producers

Thursday, February 1, 2018

From the USDA

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today unveiled Farmers.gov, the new interactive one-stop website for producers maintained by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Farmers.gov is now live but will have multiple features added over the coming months to allow agricultural producers to make appointments with USDA offices, file forms, and apply for USDA programs. The website, launched at a breakfast hosted by the Michigan Farm Bureau, gathers together the three agencies that comprise USDA's Farm Production and Conservation mission area: the Farm Service Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Risk Management Agency.

“Many farmers are out in their fields using equipment that is connected to satellite and GPS technology, yet when they need to interact with USDA, they have to stop, fill out a paper form, and fax or carry it to their local office. That is a real digital divide,” Perdue said. “Our staff is friendly, and they love to see farmers in person, but they know that time is valuable. Producers are working hard to make their farms profitable, so these tools will help get the paperwork done without taking a big chunk out of the day to fill out forms.”

Farmers.gov is mobile device-friendly and can identify for farmers the most convenient USDA office locations. New functions will be added shortly, including an interactive calendar, farming success stories, an online appointment feature, digital forms, and a business data dashboard. Additionally, when the 2018 Farm Bill is signed into law, there will be plain language program descriptions and a tool to determine eligibility.

“As I've traveled to 32 states in my first nine months as Secretary of Agriculture, I have consistently heard people express a desire for greater use of technology in the way we deliver programs at USDA,” Perdue said. “It's my goal to make USDA the most effective, most efficient, most customer-focused department in the entire federal government, and Farmers.gov is a big step in that direction.”

Mandatory Auxin-Specific Herbicide Trainings Scheduled for Dicamba Applicators

The Texas Department of Agriculture requires special training in 2018 for new auxin herbicides applied under a Section 3 approval on dicamba-tolerant cotton.

February 5 – Sudan Community Center (meeting hosted by Texas Producers Coop), **Sudan**, 11 a.m.-Noon.

February 7 – Attebury Grain office, 1201 NW 5th St., **Tulia**. 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Lunch provided. RSVP by Feb. 2 to the Swisher County Extension office, 806-995-3726.

February 9 – Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center, 6500 W. Amarillo Blvd., **Amarillo**. 8:30-9:30 a.m.

February 12 – Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center, 1102 E. FM 1294, **Lubbock**. 10-11 a.m.

February 13 – Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office - Lubbock County, 916 Main Street, Suite 401, **Lubbock**. 10-11 a.m.

February 20 – Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office – Terry County, 209 S. 5th St., **Brownfield**, Noon-1 p.m.

There is no registration fee on any of these training programs and each class will provide one TDA continuing education unit in laws and regulations. A complete list is available at <http://www.plainscotton.org/agconferences.html>.

Upcoming Area Ag Conferences

February 6 – Sandyland Ag Conference, Gaines County Civic Building, **Seminole**. Info: Terry Millican, CEA-Ag/NR, 432-758-4006.

February 7 – High Plains Irrigation Conference, Amarillo Civic Center, 401 S. Buchanan, **Amarillo**. Registration at 8 a.m., \$30 fee. CEUs pending. Info: Texas Agricultural Irrigation Association, <http://www.taia.org>, or Dr. Charles Hillyer, AgriLife Extension irrigation specialist, 806-677-5600.

February 13-14 – No-Till Texas' Inaugural Soil Health Symposium, Bayer Museum of Agriculture, Lubbock. \$50 fee, lunch included. Register by contacting Tamara Daniel, Texas Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, 254-778-8741 or email tamaradaniel@thegateway.net.

PCG EDITOR'S NOTE: A complete list is available at <http://www.plainscotton.org/agconferences.html>. Please submit any additions/edits to maryjane@plainscotton.org.

Editor's Note:

“Cotton News”, a weekly service of Plains Cotton Growers to the cotton industry and news media in the 41-county High Plains area, is mailed from Lubbock each Friday. Its contents are confined to news items and comments pertaining to the High Plains cotton industry which is so vital to U.S. all. Anyone interested in making comments about the contents of this column can call 806-792-4904 or Email PCG at: editor@plainscotton.org