

# Dow Takes on Monsanto with Biotech Soybean

CAREY GILLAM, Reuters

INDIANAPOLIS | (Reuters) - Dow AgroSciences, a unit of chemical conglomerate Dow Chemical, is launching a genetically altered soybean seed aimed as a direct assault on the dominance of global seed leader Monsanto Co.

Dow submitted a regulatory package on Friday seeking government approval for a glyphosate-tolerant soybean that the company says would be the "first-ever, three-gene," herbicide-tolerant soybean.

The new soybean will be tolerant of a new Dow AgroSciences herbicide that combines glyphosate, glufosinate and 2,4-D so farmers can spray the weedkiller on fields without harming the crop.

"This is our most important project ever," said Dow AgroSciences CEO Antonio Galindez said in an interview with Reuters. "It is big."

Dow is dubbing the system "Enlist" and sees it as a replacement for Monsanto's wildly popular Roundup Ready system that accounts for over 90 percent of U.S. soybean acreage and also has a foothold over the vast majority of corn planted in the United States.

After Monsanto introduced its first Roundup Ready soybean in 1996, farmers embraced the system because it made killing weeds easier. But since then, glyphosate use over Roundup Ready soybeans, corn, cotton and other crops has grown so heavy that several species of crop-choking weeds have become resistant to glyphosate-based Roundup and those weeds are spreading rapidly through North and South America.

Dow's Enlist system combines glyphosate and two other herbicides in a way that Dow's research has shown kills the weeds that no longer respond to glyphosate, while still knocking out those that do.

Farmers would need to buy not only the new herbicide but also the Dow seeds to gain the benefit.

"We call Enlist our Amazon Kindle," said Galindez, referring to the electronic book reader released in 2007 that has helped spur a decline in sales of traditional books from bookstores.

"It is bringing the next level of technology to the market," said Galindez.

Pending regulatory approval the soybean trait package is expected to be available by 2015.

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Dow AgroSciences has been quietly inviting farmers and seed companies to a "show farm" outside its headquarters in Indianapolis to demonstrate the results of comparative testing of Enlist versus Roundup.

Experts estimate glyphosate-resistant weeds have infested close to 11 million acres. It is common for weeds to develop resistance to herbicides. At least 130 types of weeds have developed levels of herbicide resistance in more than 40 U.S. states, more than found in any other country, according to weed scientists.

Enlist follows Dow AgroSciences launch in 2010 of SmartStax, an insect protection-trait and herbicide-resistance technology for corn developed under a cross-licensing agreement between Dow AgroSciences and Monsanto.

Galindez said Enlist will build on SmartStax and hopefully help Dow AgroSciences gain significant market share.

The release is part of an ongoing alliance between Dow AgroSciences and M.S. Technologies, a trait and technology provider.

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