

- TRENDING TODAY
- BL Delay in revision of fixed costs to
- Export demand lends flavour to jeera
- Monsoon unfazed by El Nino threat
- BL Bearish cues drag edible oils down
- BL Rubber skin on weaker signals

North America and EU at war over herbicide glyphosate in pulses

G. CHANDRASHEKHAR T+ T-



Farmer sprays pesticide to ward off rampant pest attack - Business Line

RECENTLY IN BARCELONA

With the recent discovery of unacceptable levels of an agro-chemical by name glyphosate in lentils imported into the European Union, a huge controversy between exporters from North America (the US and Canada) and importers from Europe has erupted, with potential to disrupt trade between the two regions in the short term.

While the US and Canada have set maximum residue limit (MRL) for glyphosate at 5 and 4 ppm (parts per million) respectively, the EU has authorised use of the chemical on various crops, but not done so for lentils. In the event, as a 'detection of use' standard, MRL of 0.1 ppm for glyphosate on lentils has been set by the EU.

Health impact

Asserting that glyphosate does not pose a human health risk, representatives of North American pulses export promotion organisations – Pulse Canada and the US Dry Pea and Lentil Council – were at pains to explain to buyers around the world here during the annual convention that scientific studies showed no adverse health impact.

Even as the US and Canadian lentil industries along with appropriate regulatory agencies are working closely with the EU authorities to seek a timely, science-based solution to the problem, unfortunately for the exporting countries, it may take 12 months or more for the EU to go through its process of reviewing the herbicide residue tolerance.

The chemical

Glyphosate (N-(phosphonomethyl) glycine) is a broad-spectrum systemic herbicide used to control weeds that compete with other crops. Initially sold under the trade name Roundup, glyphosate is now sold under various trade names. Incidentally, the life science major Monsanto is the owner of the trade name and the chemical is extensively used for cultivation of genetically modified soyabean (Roundup Ready).

Meanwhile, lentil growers have been cautioned about use of the herbicide heading into the 2011 growing season. The 18,000-strong association of Saskatchewan Pulse Growers has been cautioned about the fact that while use of the chemical on lentil crop may meet the Canadian glyphosate MRL of 4 ppm, it will not meet the EU MRL of 0.1 ppm.

American demand

Buyers may ask producers to sign a declaration regarding their pre-harvest glyphosate use on lentils for the 2011 growing season. North American representatives are demanding that EU change its MRL standard soon so as not to disrupt trade; but the EU is unlikely to budge anytime soon, claim others.

The controversy over MRL for glyphosate seems to be a renewal of a late-1990s acrimonious war between the US and Europe over trade in genetically modified crops such as soyabean. While the US claims to stand by 'sound science', the EU is obsessed with 'precautionary principle'.

Indian scene

In India, which is the largest importer of various pulses including lentils, there is hardly any awareness about use of agro-chemicals in growing countries. India's border controls are not only tardy but ill-equipped to detect unacceptable levels of agro-chemicals. May be it is time for plant quarantine authorities here to study the issue more closely and put in place appropriate systems and procedures to ensure imported foods are not too loaded with chemicals.

The MRL restriction on glyphosate in the EU may eventually turn out to be a temporary non-tariff barrier; but helps to highlight how countries are progressively tightening their food safety and quality regulations.

Published on May 04, 2011

- TOPICS**
- pesticide cultivation Canada pulses (commodity)
 - USA pests (agriculture)

- f
- t
- G+
- in
- p
- e
- 0
- Print

Previous Story

AP gives nod for rice exports to other States

Next Story

Lack of N. Indian demand grinds turmeric

Get more of your favourite news delivered to your inbox

Promoted Content

Recommended by

- Top 10 Mac Antivirus - Do Mac Users Really Need**
My Antivirus Review
- Salary above 25000? Apply for Credit Card Now.**
BankBazaar.com
- 15 Prehistoric Creatures That Are Still Alive Today**
Far and Wide

More From The Hindu Business Line

- The dark side of Croatia's soccer 'soft power'**
- Reliance to launch fixed line broadband for homes...**
- 'Entire nation saw what eyes did today'**
- PM Modi thanks Congress for exposing the**
- Karnataka CM mulls making Belagavi the second capital**
- 'India has taken a quantum jump in the wrong**
- Mallya: I have become a poster boy of bank default...**
- More than a four-letter word**
- ICICI Bank slips into the red for the first time ever**

This article is closed for comments. Please Email the Editor

- Specials
- Portfolio
- BL Ink
- Catalyst
- India File

- Small units, big contributors**
TN has developed a vibrant MSME presence across several key industries
- Electrifying performance in renewable power**
Favourable geographic factors, coupled with shrewd policy-making, have made the State a leading light in green ...
- Speeding along the info highway, too**
An ICT pioneer, the TN govt has come up with various schemes to take e-governance to the common man
- Policy support powers State back on to the fast track**
But Tamil Nadu has a long way to go before it regains its top position at the national level