



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service



Detection of GE Wheat Volunteer Plants in Washington State

USDA has confirmed the discovery by a farmer of 22 genetically engineered (GE) wheat plants growing in an unplanted agricultural field in Washington State. The GE wheat in question is resistant to the herbicide glyphosate, commonly referred to as Roundup®. APHIS has taken prompt and thorough action in response to this discovery and has no evidence of GE wheat in commerce.

The GE wheat was developed by the Monsanto Company and is referred to as MON 71700, containing the CP4-EPSPS protein. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) previously evaluated crops containing the CP4-EPSPS protein for safety through its voluntary biotechnology consultation process. Due to the small number of affected plants, and based on the available information about MON 71700 and CP4-EPSPS, FDA concluded it is unlikely that the wheat would present any safety concerns if present in the food supply as a result of this incident.

Working with the farmer, APHIS has taken measures to ensure that no GE wheat moves into commerce. Out of an abundance of caution, APHIS is testing the farmer's full wheat harvest for the presence of any GE material. The farmer's harvest is complete, and it continues to be held while USDA completes tests of the grain. So far all samples continue to be negative for any GE material. If any wheat tests positive for GE material, the farmer's crop will not be allowed in commerce.

Monsanto has developed a test that will identify MON 71700 in commercial grain shipments, and USDA has validated the test and its sensitivity level so that trading partners can use the test for wheat imports, if they choose.

USDA is collaborating with our state, industry and trading partners, and we are committed to providing all our partners with timely and transparent information about our findings.

There are no genetically engineered (GE) wheat varieties for sale or in commercial production in the United States at this time, as APHIS has not deregulated any GE wheat varieties.

In recent years, USDA has taken steps to strengthen its oversight of regulated GE field trials. APHIS now requires developers to apply for a permit for field trials involving GE wheat beginning with GE wheat planted on or after January 1, 2016. The decision to require the more stringent permit process rather than the notification process employed in the past, provides added protection that GE wheat will remain confined during field trials.

