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Dicamba is 'tremendous success,' says Monsanto; EPA mulls rule change

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Monsanto chief technology officer [Robb Fraley](#) says there will be enough dicamba-tolerant seed available to account for half of U.S. soybean plantings next year. At the same time that EPA reportedly is considering new guidelines on use of the weedkiller, Fraley described dicamba as a “tremendous success” for “the overwhelming majority of farmers using” the low-volatility formulation of the herbicide.

Growers have reported dicamba damage on 3.1 million acres of soybeans this summer, according to figures compiled by a University of Missouri weed specialist. Arkansas banned use of dicamba on cotton and soybeans for the rest of this growing season and Missouri tightened its application rules because of complaints that the weedkiller was damaging nearby crops. Arkansas convened a task force to find a long-term solution to the problem.

In remarks prepared for a farm show, Fraley said “the overwhelming majority of farmers using” the low-volatility version of dicamba “are experiencing tremendous success ... we have heard some complaints of leaf-cupping, which can have many probable causes. In the vast majority of situations, we have identified issues that are addressable through training and following the label instructions, and we continue to hear from many farmers that our training and education efforts helped them use the technology successfully this season.”

Two EPA officials told [Ag Profesional](#) that the agency, which issued a two-year approval in late 2016 for the weedkiller, was considering changes ahead of the 2018 growing season on use of dicamba. One of the officials, Dan Kenny, referred to the hundreds of complaints in saying, “We don’t consider this to be normal growing pains for a new technology.” Reuben Baris, who

oversees herbicide registrations, said, “We are working as fast as we can to make meaningful changes for the 2018 growing season. We are working with the registrants to make meaningful regulatory changes so growers are able to make the most informed decisions for the 2018 season.” Kenny said the EPA set the two-year approval on dicamba because of concerns about weed resistance and “off-target movement” of the chemical.

A Monsanto executive, Ty Whitten, told [Farm Journal](#), “We’ve been on over 1,000 calls and everything we’re finding supports the label as it stands.” The key is strict adherence to instructions on conditions for spraying the weedkiller, including wind speed, boom height and nozzle type, he said.

An Iowa State University agronomy professor, Bob Hartzler told the [Washington Post](#), “I’ve come to the conclusion that (dicamba) is not manageable.”

Growers have embraced dicamba as a way to combat invasive weeds that are becoming resistant to glyphosate.