

Wheat industry watches EU glyphosate renewal

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press



Dalton Henry

The agriculture industry is watching the European Union to determine the fate of glyphosate as a tool for farmers.

Glyphosate, known by the trade name Roundup, has been used as an herbicide for 40 years to rid farm fields of weeds. More recently, it has also been used in conjunction with a handful of genetically modified "Roundup Ready" crops that are resistant to it. This allows farmers to kill weeds without killing the crops.

Use of the chemical will be up for renewal in the EU in the next few years.

Many food companies will follow the EU, said Dalton Henry, vice president of policy for U.S. Wheat Associates, the overseas marketing arm of the industry. They want to be able to export finished products to those countries.

The EU would need to consider an import tolerance, allowing for a small amount of residue, under World Trade Organization rules.

"They can't just ban it because they don't like it, they're going to have to pro-

vide sound science as to why that action would need to be taken," Henry said.

Chemical weed control, especially the use of glyphosate, is critical to minimum-tillage or no-till wheat farming and is used to kill weeds or cover crops. No glyphosate-resistant wheat is commercially available.

U.S. Wheat advocates for the safety and benefits of allowing farmers to use the chemicals, he said.

Henry spoke July 14 in an online presentation hosted by the Idaho Wheat Commission and Oregon Wheat Commission. The topic was tariff and non-tariff trade barriers, which impact farmers' ability

to get their wheat to customers around the world.

Retaliatory tariffs make the headlines, Henry said. Tariffs are government-to-government matters, and the industry asks U.S. farmers and overseas customers to lobby their respective governments.

Non-tariff barriers require a whole-industry approach, Henry said. They include pesticide maximum residue limits called MRLs, weed seeds, smuts or spores and mycotoxins.

Wheat is shipped in 50,000-60,000 ton vessels. Individual farmers are a small part of that, but if a chemical is ever misused or misapplied,

it can create problems, Henry said.

"Making sure we're staying within label instructions is particularly key," he said.

The industry relies on science indicating expected residues down the line when applied according to label rates.

"If we go to argue with other countries about where an MRL may be too restrictive, that's the science we have to point to," Henry said.

While it's never been easy to ship wheat overseas, Henry doesn't believe it's going to get "dramatically" harder either, pointing to projections for global population growth. "It's still a hungry world,"

he said. "Many of our customers are still countries where 'calories' is the largest demand beyond anything."

The biggest trade barrier growers face is lack of understanding of science among consuming populations and importing agencies, he said.

"At some point, we're going to have to square all of the things consumers are demanding from U.S. growers and corporate food companies with the reality of how products are traded and handled," he said. "If you want to make demands about sustainability of production, you've got to allow farmers access to the best technology that's out there."

Yogurt rule not up to speed

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press



Wikipedia

New Food and Drug Administration yogurt rule leaves industry cold.

Four decades after it first began, the federal Food and Drug Administration has issued its final rule to modernize the standard of identity for yogurt, and the International Dairy Foods Association is not impressed.

The agency's drawn-out process of rulemaking and scant consultation with industry has resulted in a rule that doesn't reflect current manufacturing practices or consumer preferences, the IDFA said. The association has filed a formal objection.

FDA has consulted very little with yogurt makers and has largely ignored IDFA's comments and suggested revisions, said Joseph Scimeca, the association's senior vice president of regulatory and scientific affairs.

"The result is a yogurt standard that is woefully behind the times and doesn't match the reality of today's food processing environment or the expectations of consumers," he said.

IDFA is pleased the

agency finally put out a final rule but has some serious concerns, said Michael Dykes, president and CEO of the association.

Updates to the final rule have been pending since 1982 when, in response to objections, FDA stayed several major provisions of its 1981 final rule that first established standards for yogurt.

Dairy food makers began petitioning FDA to update the standard in 2000.

Finalizing the rule has been a priority for FDA, and IDFA has submitted comments and offered revisions and technical assistance. It has also continued to request updates on the status of the

final rule and has stressed the importance of modernizing and finalizing the standard in a timely manner.

"The FDA is broken. The process needs to be more transparent and more timely. Four decades is just too long," Dykes said.

The rule is out, but unfortunately it reflects comments that are 12 years old — when FDA proposed a rule but never finalized it — and doesn't reflect current industry practices, he said.

"Science and technology and consumer preferences have changed significantly in 40 years," Dykes said.

The industry could have shared how things have changed with FDA, but 40 years of non-transparency on the part of the agency doesn't lend itself to such discussions, he said.

One concern is a requirement that yogurt must reach a pH of 4.6 before fruit is added. But that's not how the industry has been making cup-set yogurt. Ingredients are put in the cup together and fermented in a vat, he said.

House amendment aims at year-round labor access

By **CAROL RYAN DUMAS**
Capital Press



U.S. Capitol

The House Appropriations Committee has approved an amendment to the FY 2022 Homeland Security Appropriations Act that would allow agricultural employers with year-round labor needs to access the H-2A program in fiscal year 2022.

The amendment was introduced by Reps. Henry Cuellar, D-Texas, and Dan Newhouse, R-Wash.

"Our farmers and ranchers remain in desperate need of a legal and reliable workforce," Newhouse told the committee.

Americans do not want these jobs, and farmers must turn to the H-2A program, he said.

"Unfortunately, the program does not work for all of agriculture, such as the dairy industry or the greenhouse industry or operations with multiple crops with harvest times that overlap requiring year-round labor," he said.

The H-2A temporary visa program is limited to temporary and seasonal labor needs and does not provide for year-round labor needs.

"This amendment, while

only a few lines on a piece of paper ... would provide critical relief to the entire agricultural industry," he said.

The amendment won't change the time limits on how long H-2A guestworkers can stay in the country or the requirement that farmers need to show they first tried to hire American workers, he said.

"It would simply ensure that all of agriculture can utilize the H-2A program. It supports legal immigration," he said.

The amendment allows agricultural employers to use H-2A regardless of whether the work is temporary or seasonal, said Claudia Larson, senior director of government regulations for National

Milk Producers Federation.

That's really useful to the dairy industry and other year-round industries that are not allowed to access H-2A workers, she said.

While the amendment just pertains to fiscal year 2022, the effects of this amendment go beyond that to the broader immigration conversation, she said.

It is a short-term fix, but it adds momentum to the ongoing bipartisan effort to find a long-term legislative solution to the agricultural labor crisis, she said.

The dairy industry is awaiting a companion bill in the Senate that improves upon the Farm Workforce Modernization Act that was passed in the House, she said.

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY



Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences

Office of the Dean

As Interim Dean for the College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences at WSU, I am privileged to see on a daily basis how diverse groups of people can work together toward a common goal and overcome obstacles both great and small.

On June 27, when a wildfire broke out east of Lind and about a half-mile away from WSU's Lind Dryland Research Station, fears abounded that the devastation of this fire could be catastrophic to the community of Lind, and to the research station.

But thanks to the rapid response to the Lind Fire Department who arrived first on the scene, and the network of other firefighters who quickly arrived from Ritzville, Odessa, Washtucna, Connell, Ephrata, and Moses Lake, along with several area farmers who deployed their own water trucks to the fire, the damage was drastically limited and the fire extinguished. That these brave individuals faced such a complex and fast-moving fire is heroic on its own merits. That they fought this blaze on a day when the temperature soared to 105 F makes their efforts all the more extraordinary.

For their selflessness, courage, and devotion to their communities, I want to offer my heartfelt thanks and deepest gratitude to the men and women who came together to help their neighbors in their hour of need.

As we take stock of this event, I look forward to renewed collaborations with farmers, industry leaders, elected officials, experts, and community members in addressing the ongoing threat wildfire presents, and leveraging critical resources that will help us better understand, mitigate, and prevent wildfires in the future.

Again, I want to offer my heartiest thanks and gratitude.

Sincerely,

Richard T. Koenig

Richard T. Koenig, Interim Dean
College of Agricultural, Human,
and Natural Resource Sciences
Washington State University



Washington's raspberry industry gets report to mull

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press



Washington State University

The Washington Red Raspberry Commission will digest a recently released report by the U.S. International Trade Commission on global production and competition.

The Washington Red Raspberry Commission will study a 314-page federal report, looking for grounds to pursue a trade complaint.

The recently published report by the U.S. International Trade Commission repeats figures, estimates and comments gathered during a year-long investigation into global red raspberry production.

A surge in imported berries between 2010 and 2015 continues to lower sales for Washington berry farmers, the report acknowledges, even though imports have leveled off and declined slightly since then.

However, the report doesn't outright answer the raspberry commission's main concern: Whether lower-grade Mexican raspberries are being dumped into the U.S. at below the cost of production.

"I can't say we accomplished that," said Henry Bierlink, executive director of the raspberry commission. "I think we got at least a partial answer."

"Certainly a number of us are looking at it," he said. "What we do about it is the next question."

At the request of the raspberry commission, the Trump administration's top trade official, Robert Lighthizer, ordered the fact-finding investigation by the trade commission, an independent agency.

Whatcom County, Wash., farmers produce most of the U.S. red raspberries that are immediately frozen individually or in blocks.

Mexico's raspberry indus-

try focuses on fresh market sales, but some berries, known as "seconds," are sold to processors and compete directly with Washington berries.

The trade commission didn't find any evidence to contradict testimony from the Mexican raspberry industry that "seconds" make up only about 10% of Mexican imports to the U.S.

The Washington raspberry industry suspects that rising imports of fresh Mexican berries means that more "seconds" are being diverted to processors at salvage prices.

One Mexican official testified that fewer Mexican berries were failing to meet fresh-market standards because of improved cultivars.

The trade commission said that incomplete trade data "confounded" investigators, who were unable to determine whether the volume of Mexican "seconds" was rising or falling.

The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative did not respond to a request for comment.

Washington's red rasp-

berry industry warns that declining prices will lead to fewer acres planted and fewer domestic farmers.

Mexican red raspberry production nearly doubled between 2015 and 2019, driven primarily by the lucrative U.S. fresh market, according to the trade commission's report.

Mexican farmers grow berries year-round in hoop houses. The berries are hand-picked by workers who make an average of \$1.29 an hour, according to the report.

Washington farmers are vulnerable to bad weather and machine pick. The workers earn, on average, \$14.49 an hour, according to the report.

The report also examined imports from other countries. Imports from Canada, Serbia and Mexico increased by 40.5% in the past half dozen years, but Chile pulled back, pushing overall imports down 6%.

Between 2015 and 2020, Washington farmers sold roughly \$530 million worth of red raspberries for processing, compared to \$740 million by foreign competitors, according to the trade commission.