ROUNDUP READY PLUS®
CROP MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

MINIMIZING WEED SEED TRANSFER AT HARVEST

What You'll Learn...

- Weather conditions and challenges with weed control this season may have left some fields weedy as harvest approaches.
- Simple steps such as harvesting weedy fields last and carefully cleaning harvest equipment between fields can help minimize the spread of weeds between fields, including herbicide-resistant biotypes.

Figure 1. Weeds present in soybeans at harvest.

Less than ideal weather conditions can lead to untimely herbicide applications in some fields resulting in higher than normal weed densities at harvest. Fall harvest is an important time to evaluate weed management programs, note the location of problematic weeds, and take steps to minimize the transfer of weed seeds. Harvest equipment can greatly contribute to the spread of weed seeds across fields. Having a plan in place prior to harvest can help minimize and potentially slow the spread of hard-to-control weeds.

Locate Weedy Fields Prior to Harvest

Whenever feasible, harvest weedy fields and dense weedy areas of fields last. Harvesting these fields last can help to minimize the transfer of weed seed during harvest from weedy areas to weed-free areas. Weeds may interfere with harvest because they often do not dry down as quickly as the crop and may clog harvesting equipment.

Clean Harvest Machinery

Harvesting equipment should be cleaned prior to first harvest use. Weed seed can be dispersed among fields by all harvesting equipment. Thoroughly clean all harvest equipment including combines, tractors, trucks, augers, and tarps. Be sure to reverse and clean augers. Tractors and harvesting equipment should be cleaned prior to moving them from field to field to minimize the spread of weed seed. Weed seed can also move and be spread over large areas on soil that sticks to tractor and combine tires. The most common and efficient methods of cleaning equipment include vacuuming, sweeping, and using compressed air or water.

Figure 2. When feasible, harvest weed-free fields first.

The best way to prevent and protect your farm from weeds dispersed by harvesting equipment is to implement an effective weed management program. The location of weedy areas should be documented at harvest to help develop a weed management plan for the following season. The plan should include strategies to identify problematic fields and develop cleaning procedures for all harvesting equipment.

By implementing and following this type of program, the potential for the mechanical spread of weeds will be reduced.

Sources:
Bagavathiannan, M.V., Norsworthy, J.K., Scott, R.C., and Barber, T.L. The spread of herbicide resistant weeds: What should growers know? University of Arkansas Extension, FSA2171, http://www.uaex.edu.
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Web sources verified 8/12/2015.