

New tech requires stewardship

By WILLIE VOGT

THE long-awaited announcement right at the end of 2008 from Bayer CropScience means farmers will have new tools for weed control in 2009. Bayer announced that more than 85 companies will be marketing LibertyLink soybeans across the country, starting this season. The firm says there will be enough seed to cover about 1 million acres in maturities from 0.5 to 4.9, which offers growers in a broad swath of soybean country new management options.

Whether you raise cotton, canola, soybeans or corn, you'll have a LibertyLink choice of varieties or hybrids in 2009. For John Ashcraft, who farms near Marshfield in Union County, N.C., LibertyLink technology works for his corn crop. "Last year about half my corn was in LibertyLink," Ashcraft says. "I've been using Roundup Ready corn and soybeans, but I'm worried about resistant pigweed and Palmer amaranth in my area."

For 2009, he's planning to use 100% LibertyLink corn and Roundup Ready soybeans to rotate weed control program on his land. "We're always wondering when weed resistance is going to get us," Ashcraft comments. "Weeds have a way of surviving."

While Bayer points out there's no documented resistance to glufosinate (the active ingredient in Ignite), weed scientists say early stewardship now will protect the technology. Ford Baldwin, longtime Southern weed specialist and now a private consultant, says combining this new weed control technology with conventional approaches offers the best chance for avoiding resistance.

"We've not used enough conventional technology. There are good herbicides out there, but they can't stand alone," he says.

Adding to the mix

Baldwin, along with other weed specialists, notes that use of LibertyLink crops, glyphosate-tolerant crops and conventional crops can provide a "systematic" type of rotation. "If we get started on the right foot with LibertyLink, you



A NEW WEED CONTROL CHOICE: Soybean growers will have LibertyLink varieties available in 2009 in limited supply, offering a new herbicide approach.

Key Points

- More than 85 companies will market LibertyLink soybeans in 2009.
- Consider rotations to maximize the value of this new technology.
- Ignite replaces Liberty as the herbicide for this system.

could rotate it to Roundup Ready soybeans," he notes. "And corn offers the best chance for bringing in conventional herbicides. You can plant LibertyLink or Roundup Ready corn, so that you have that option."

The interesting irony in this news is that while you'll have LibertyLink technology in all those crops, you won't

spray with Liberty. Instead, you'll be using Ignite, a new formulation of glufosinate. "We've cleared the pipeline [of Liberty], and we'll be marketing one product — Ignite — in 2009," says Andy Hurst, product manager, herbicide tolerance traits, Bayer CropScience. "Ignite is 40% more concentrated than the old Liberty formulation that it will replace."

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