



American Seed Trade Association

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NEWS RELEASE

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Seed industry demonstrates that coexistence is not only possible, but necessary

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Increased awareness about the need for coexistence among different agricultural technologies and practices spurred the American Seed Trade Association to develop three resources demonstrating that coexistence is possible and necessary to meet different market demands.

These resources include a paper, “Existing U.S. Seed Industry Production Practices that Address Coexistence,” ASTA’s principles about the practice of coexistence in the seed industry and a Guide to Seed Quality Management, which are all available online at www.amseed.org/news_Coexistence.asp.

The principles document articulates how the seed industry has historically practiced coexistence and these practices in their current context. It also cites specific examples where those tools have been effectively used within the industry.

“Pulling together these resources has been a priority for ASTA during the past year,” says Andy LaVigne, ASTA president and chief executive officer. “The seed industry has been practicing coexistence for many years and with the changing agricultural landscape, the necessity for cooperation between producers of varying production methods within close proximity continues to rise.

“It’s important the agriculture community understands that there are mechanisms being used to help foster coexistence, helping each farmer – no matter the production method – get the most value out of their chosen crop.”

Coexistence, as defined by ASTA, is the practice of growing, reproducing and handling seed products with different characteristics or intended markets with the goal of successfully achieving intended product integrity and maintaining the economic value of such products.

“This essentially means that a producer can choose to grow a crop using a specific method for a specific market and is confident product integrity will be maintained and it will meet standards for the intended market,” says Bernice Slutsky, ASTA vice president of science and international affairs.

“Having markets drive what farmers produce and how they utilize those products and how they steward those products is not new.”

Some of the tools used by the seed industry, which are outlined in the paper, include standards set by the Association of Seed Certifying Agencies and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Seed Schemes, best management practices on the seed production and systems management side, contracting, pinning, communication and cooperation.

“Historically if you are developing or commercializing a value-added product, it’s your responsibility to maintain its value through the production process,” Slutsky says. “This is normally done through an identity preservation system. Seed is one of the most highly identity preserved products on the market, because the integrity of seed needs to be very high so that farmers get the products they want.”

Slutsky also says it’s important to recognize that seed producers and growers are dealing with biological systems and some market expectations do not take this into account.

“Inherent in most quality standards is the fact that we are dealing with biological systems and there is no 100 percent or 0 percent in biological systems,” she says.

The principles document was reviewed by ASTA’s Organic Seed, Biotechnology and Stewardship committees in addition to the five ASTA divisions.

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