How glyphosate-resistant weeds led to Monsanto's dicamba herbicide crisis

[In] the 1990s, Monsanto began selling a series of patented, genetically modified, "RoundUp"-ready seeds. Monsanto had altered crop seeds…to be resistant to glyphosate. A farmer planting these seeds could spray his field with glyphosate, killing off weeds while leaving his crop intact. It's the agricultural equivalent of getting to eat all of the chocolate without gaining any weight.

Over time, however, the weeds *also* became RoundUp ready, developing resistance to glyphosate …So, last year Monsanto unveiled a new soybean seed, Roundup Ready2 Xtend, that was *also* resistant to dicamba, allowing farmers to douse their fields in both products. Because the herbicides kill plants using different mechanisms of action, plants that are resistant to one are unlikely to be resistant to the other.

There was only one problem. While the Ready2 Xtend seeds were approved by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), there wasn't actually a dicamba herbicide approved for use with them.

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If the EPA approved existing formulations of dicamba for use on Ready2xtend, they ran the risk that a farmer growing other soybeans would get a visit from their neighbor's dicamba spray. In fact, last year—the first year Ready2xtend seeds were available, albeit without an approved dicamba formulation—researchers from the University of Arkansas say that is exactly what happened.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: A chemical meant to save plants is actually killing them—and it's spreading