

EPA appears likely to re-approve drift-prone dicamba herbicides with added restrictions

When the U.S. EPA reregistered dicamba soybean herbicides for use on Xtend soybeans in 2018, labels were effective for two years. The two-year registration expires in December.

Bryan Young, a Purdue University weed control specialist and researcher, says EPA is gathering information about dicamba now. He is part of a group of weed scientists who shared their views with EPA recently.

Here, Young shares his insights about the situation with Farm Progress:

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How does EPA make decisions? It weighs risks versus rewards. Risks include drift issues. Rewards include providing farmers with a valuable tool to control tough weeds resistant to glyphosate and some other chemistries. If drift problems continue to escalate in 2020, or if growers achieve less weed control from dicamba due to evolution of resistant weeds, the risk-benefit calculation changes.

What might happen? I expect EPA to likely continue registration of these herbicides but include more restrictions. Dicamba drift complaints to state agencies in several Midwestern and Southern states, including Illinois and Indiana, have continued to increase over the past three years. It's also true that these products kill weeds when applied properly.

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