

**Renfrew County Local  
National Farmers Union  
Ontario**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**GM ALFALFA RULING BY U.S. SUPREME COURT HAS SWEEPING  
IMPLICATIONS FOR CANADIAN FARMERS AND ALL CITIZENS**

Beachburg, ON – Dave Mackay, President of the Renfrew County National Farmers Union reports; last week the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the genetically-modified (GM) alfalfa cannot be planted or sold in the country. This ruling has very significant implications for Canadian farmers and all other citizens. Canada's National Farmers Union (NFU) participated in an "amicus brief" to the U.S. Supreme Court as part of this case.

The case, *Monsanto v. Geerston Farms*, marks the first time a GM crop case has been brought before the U.S. Supreme Court. Ruling on a lower court decision, the Supreme Court upheld a ban on the sale and planting of Monsanto's Roundup Ready alfalfa. The ban will remain in place until the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prepares a proper Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and until the USDA succeeds in officially "deregulating" the crop – a move that will be scrutinized and opposed (possibly in court) by many groups. Work on an EIS and possible deregulation will take at least a year, possibly much longer, giving farmers and others opposed to GM alfalfa time to gain a permanent ban. The U.S. ruling also makes Canadian GM Alfalfa commercialization less likely.

The proposed introduction of GM alfalfa in North America threatens Canadian agriculture and food in several ways. First, organic farmers will face risks and lost income. Experience with canola and flax in Canada and rice and other crops in the U.S. shows that GM alfalfa, if approved, will contaminate our fields and seed stocks. Alfalfa plays a key role in organic farming systems and crop rotations. The introduction of GM alfalfa will make it difficult for some farmers to continue in organic crop production. It will make it more difficult to raise organic livestock. The threat (or reality) of contamination may close overseas markets for a wide range of organic (and conventional) crops. And the risk of rejected shipments will create unbearable financial risks for organic and conventional farmers alike. Several groups in Canada share the NFU's concerns, including key players in the alfalfa seed industry.

Second, many Canadians choose alfalfa sprouts as a nutritious food. Most of those citizens want non-GM sprouts. The introduction of GM alfalfa will mean that all alfalfa-based foods will have some level of GM contamination.

Third, alfalfa is a main feed source for Canadian livestock – beef and dairy cattle, especially NFU President Terry Boehm commented: "The alfalfa that goes into our beef and dairy cattle is turned into the beef and milk we serve our families. And if that alfalfa is genetically-modified,

that makes a difference to Canadians.” The NFU was part of a broad coalition that won a multi-year campaign to prevent the use of genetically-modified milk-production hormones in Canadian dairy herds.

Fourth, alfalfa is one of the most widely grown crops in Canada, covering more than ten million acres. It is also a primary food source for the bees that make our honey, and that pollinate other food crops. “Introducing GM alfalfa will have a huge impact on the landscape, and on our ecosystems. No one has evaluated the effects of GM alfalfa on the environment. Canadians will not accept widespread environmental risk just so Monsanto can make large private profits,” concluded Boehm.

“Locally in Renfrew County, many farmers depend on hardy alfalfa seed varieties which withstand our cold winters. In the case of the introduction of genetically-modified (GM) alfalfa, we could very well lose through time, that hardy trait in our seeds,” concluded Mackay.

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