

Without Alternatives Atrazine Elimination would Severely Compromise Sweet Corn Production

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Sweet corn growers will lose their principal method of weed control and be faced with increased expenses if use of the herbicide atrazine is eliminated as a result of a comprehensive re-evaluation being carried out by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Although atrazine has been registered for use in the United States since 1958 and is a primary mechanism of weed control in all types of corn, ongoing controversy about the herbicide has prompted the EPA to conduct a reassessment.

In the article "Significance of Atrazine in Sweet Corn Weed Management Systems," researchers have, for the first time, documented the tools used to control weeds in sweet corn and have determined that atrazine is applied to two-thirds of the fields studied. Atrazine is already known to play a central role in field corn weed management systems. This study shows that the herbicide is even more important in sweet corn.

Loss of atrazine would have serious consequences, especially to growers whose fields are particularly weedy and to growers moving away from soil cultivation. Moreover, other herbicides registered in sweet corn perform better when applied with atrazine. One alternative, mesotrione, is both more expensive and less effective. Subsequent production cost increases would invariably be passed on to consumers, whose demand for sweet corn has made it one of the most popular crops in the United States.

Atrazine is a significant component of sweet corn weed management. Presently, economically viable alternatives to replace atrazine are not well developed or demonstrated.

Full text of the article, "Significance of Atrazine in Sweet Corn Weed Management Systems," Weed Technology, 24, April–June 2010, is available at www2.allenpress.com/pdf/wete-24-02-139-142.pdf.