

News Column

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For Release 06/28/21
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FLAG THE TECHNOLOGY

I don't know a lot of details – all I really know is something got sprayed with the wrong herbicide – but a farmer friend told me this should be the topic for my next news column.

As you drive around the countryside, you don't see a lot of those bicycle flags marking fields,..... but there should be more.

You know the flags I'm talking about. When you see a bicyclist on a cross-country trip, slowly and steadily making their way across the state on one of our two-lane highways, they often have an orange safety flag mounted to their bike. The flag pole appears to be fiberglass and is about six feet tall so approaching motorists can see the bicycle from a distance.

The same style of flag is what farmers use to mark fields, identifying the herbicide technology that is safe for that crop. Marking fields helps neighbors know what is safe to spray on nearby fields, and can prevent misapplication by both custom applicators and the farmers themselves.

With the addition of Enlist technology – 2,4-D beans – we now have at least four options (or maybe five) for applying the wrong herbicide to a soybean crop. If they are conventional soybeans, with no herbicide tolerance, every one of them could be the wrong herbicide.

Herbicide technology options include:

- Roundup Ready – tolerant to glyphosate herbicide
- Liberty Link – tolerant to Liberty herbicide only

- Xtend (dicamba beans) – tolerant to Roundup and dicamba
- XtendFlex – tolerant to Roundup, dicamba, and Liberty
- Enlist (2,4-D beans) – tolerant to Roundup, Enlist (2,4-D Choline), and Liberty

Flags you can purchase online are triangular shaped, measuring 18 inches wide by 12 inches high, and are mounted on a six-foot pole. I found them priced ranging from about \$5.50 to \$7.50 each, depending on the flag. I didn't place an order, but I'm sure there will be a shipping charge added to the cost of the flags.

Flags are color-coded for the various herbicide technologies. Colors are:

- Red – signifying conventional varieties with no herbicide technology
- White – Roundup Ready technology
- Bright Green – Liberty Link technology
- Bright Yellow – Clearfield rice and STS soybeans
- Teal – Enlist (2,4-D)
- Black (black and white checkered) – Xtend (dicamba)

The red, white, and yellow flags often won't have anything written on them, but the other colors will most likely have the technology spelled out on the flag, to make it very clear what is planted in the field.

I've seen all kinds of herbicide accidents that could have been prevented if the technology had been flagged. Sometimes it is just a homeowner like me, cleaning up a few weeds along the driveway with Roundup and not knowing if the soybeans are actually glyphosate tolerant.

In more serious cases, we have seen significant damage when dicamba was sprayed near soybeans that weren't Xtend beans, with dicamba tolerance. And then there are the cases of applicators getting in the wrong field, or maybe there was a mis-communication about what

technology was planted in the field. That's when it really hurts.

Maybe it's time to spend a little money on bicycle flags. One flag is cheaper than the expense of replanting a single acre of soybeans.

If you have questions, you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-6350. Or, you can send e-mail to gmcclore@ksu.edu.

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