

WASHINGTON REPORT  
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**Superweed Definition Unanimously Approved**

At the recent WSSA meeting in Lexington, KY, the Board of Directors unanimously approved the following definition for “superweed”

***Superweed:** Slang used to describe a weed that has evolved characteristics that make it more difficult to manage due to repeated use of the same management tactic. Over-dependence on a single tactic as opposed to using diverse approaches can lead to such adaptations.*

*The most common use of the slang refers to a weed that has become resistant to one or more herbicide mechanisms of action ([www.weedscience.org](http://www.weedscience.org)) due to their repeated use in the absence of more diverse control measures. Dependence on a single mechanical, biological, or cultural management tactic has led to similar adaptations (e.g. hand-weeded barnyardgrass mimicking rice morphology, dandelion seed production in a regularly mowed lawn, knapweed resiliency to gall fly biocontrol).*

*Two common misconceptions about a superweed are that they are the result of gene transfer from genetically altered crops and that they have superior competitive characteristics. Both of these myths have been addressed by the Weed Science Society of America (WSSA) at [www.wssa.net/weed/wssa-fact-sheets](http://www.wssa.net/weed/wssa-fact-sheets). WSSA has created a variety of free educational materials and recommendations concerning herbicide resistance and how to avoid it, available at [www.wssa.net/weed/resistance](http://www.wssa.net/weed/resistance).*

**FY 2016 USDA Appropriations**

The administration released its FY 2016 budget request at the beginning of February. Things look pretty good for USDA budget items overall with NIFA, ARS, NRCS, the Economic Research Service (ERS), and National Ag Statistics Service (NASS) all receiving higher budget requests compared to FY 2015 that was just passed in December. Within USDA-NIFA, the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) grants program was recommended for a large increase from \$325 million to \$450 million. Many of USDA-NIFA’s capacity building programs also were recommended for increases compared to FY 2015, including the Hatch Act increasing from \$244 million to \$256 million and Smith Lever 3b and 3c increasing from \$300 million to \$304 million. FY 2016 funding for the IR-4 program (\$11.9 million) and the Crop Protection and Pest Management line item (\$17.2 million) would remain as in FY 2015.

**House Ag Committee Passes “NPDES Fix” Bill**

On March 19, the House Agriculture Committee passed [The Reducing Regulatory Burdens Act of 2015 \(H.R. 897\)](#). This legislation has passed the U.S. House as a stand-alone bill in two previous sessions of Congress but failed in the Senate. H.R. 897 clarifies congressional intent and eliminates the duplicate regulatory requirement of a National Pollutant Discharge

Elimination System (NPDES) permit for the use of herbicides in, over, or near waters of the United States that are already approved for use under FIFRA. This stems from the problem created in 2009 by a three-judge Court of Appeals Ruling for the Sixth Circuit. The 2009 court ruling invalidated a 2006 EPA regulation exempting pesticide applications that are in compliance with FIFRA from a requirement to also comply with NPDES permits.

### **Milkweed and Monarchs**

The Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) was petitioned by three environmental groups last August that claimed that extensive use of glyphosate on glyphosate resistant corn and soybeans in the Midwest has devastated native populations of milkweed, the sole source of food for monarch butterfly larvae. The petitioners claim that monarch butterfly populations have decreased 90 percent over the past 20 years. FWS is reviewing the status of the monarch butterfly to consider if it needs federal intervention under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). However, if we actually want to see monarch butterfly numbers rebound, listing it under the ESA is a bad idea as the ESA has a terrible track record for promoting species recovery. Along those lines, Monsanto has taken a proactive approach by contributing \$3.6 million over three years to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Monarch Butterfly Conservation Fund. The \$3.6 million will be used to match funds provided by FWS and other federal agencies that will support habitat restoration, education, outreach, and milkweed seed production to benefit monarch butterflies. To learn more about the Monarch Butterfly Conservation Fund, visit [www.nfwf.org/monarch](http://www.nfwf.org/monarch). In addition to its commitment to NFWF's Monarch Butterfly Conservation Fund, Monsanto will provide approximately \$400,000 in grants to other organizations working to protect biodiversity through both immediate and long-term actions.

### **Washington Post – We Don't Need Labels on Genetically Modified Foods**

In a March 29 editorial by the Washington Post, the editorial board discusses the false balance between scientific consensus and fear mongering in the GM food debate. They state "The GM-food debate is a classic example of activists overstating risk based on fear of what might be unknown and on a distrust of corporations." The editorial can be found at: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-dont-need-labels-telling-us-our-food-has-been-genetically-modified/2015/03/29/66f97f4a-d4c5-11e4-8fce-3941fc548f1c\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-dont-need-labels-telling-us-our-food-has-been-genetically-modified/2015/03/29/66f97f4a-d4c5-11e4-8fce-3941fc548f1c_story.html)

### **USDA Stakeholder Workshop on Coexistence**

USDA recently conducted a two day stakeholder workshop to advance an understanding of agricultural coexistence – the concurrent cultivation of conventional, organic, identity preserved (IP), and genetically engineered (GE) crops consistent with farmer choices and consumer preferences – and discuss opportunities for making coexistence more achievable for all stakeholders. The workshop was organized around three sessions: 1) the current state of affairs of coexistence; 2) knowledge gaps, challenges, and USDA's responses so far to the AC21 recommendations; and 3) additional steps USDA is considering to respond to the challenges. Webcasts of the workshop as well as copies of workshop's presentations and summaries of USDA activities that are either newly proposed or already underway to support of coexistence—are available for public viewing on the USDA Stakeholder Workshop on Coexistence Web page: <http://1.usa.gov/1CCWEXU>. There is a ton of information provided

there, but I would like guide your attention to two excellent presentations in particular regarding USDA and EPA actions on herbicide resistance weeds:

[U.S.D.A. Actions to Address Herbicide Resistance in Weeds](#): Jill Schroeder, Ph.D, USDA Office of Pest Management Policy

[EPA's Perspective on Herbicide Resistance in Weeds](#): Jack Housenger

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