Syngenta Agrisure Viptera 3110 and 3111 Corn

Syngenta's Agrisure Viptera corn, a transgenic type that contains the MIR162 (Vip3A) trait for control of Lepidoptera (caterpillars), is going to be rejected at some elevators this year (pending legal action). At least two grain companies, Bunge and Consolidated, have announced they will not accept the corn because the Chinese government has not yet approved import of this grain. Presumably, the companies do not want to risk having any Viptera corn in their grain channels because it might end up in China. Specifically, the corn with the toxin that will not be accepted is sold as Agrisure Viptera 3110 and Agrisure Viptera 3111.

Syngenta filed a complaint in the U.S. District Court in Iowa against Bunge North America for having violated Federal and State laws. Syngenta is alleging Bunge is attempting to block the legal merchandising of products that are in compliance with all U.S. regulatory requirements and industry guidelines for commercialization. (This paragraph was paraphrased from a Syngenta press release.)

Syngenta has established a communication channel for growers, seed dealers and seed retailers who have questions. E-mail can be sent to Export.Info@sygenta.com. The telephone number is (800) 319-1360 and will be active from 6 a.m. through 11 p.m. Monday through Saturday. A web page has also been established at http://AgrisureViptera.com/exportinfo.

Most Viptera corn seed was sold in the Midwest; Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and Nebraska, but there was also some sold in the Mid-South and on the High Plains of Texas.

Here are some things to consider:
1. It is the case that, for the most part, the grain supply in the U.S. Is not isolated into discreet channels and it may be logical for local elevators to reject Viptera corn if they intended to sell into the larger grain market rather than direct the corn to a specific local use (like a feedlot).
2. Viptera pollen can be carried in the wind and "contaminate" other types of transgenic and non-transgenic corn. The pollen would bring genes for the toxin, and the toxin would be present in detectable amounts in the grain of non-Viptera corn that had been "contaminated". The test kits used by elevators, exporters and importers are sensitive enough to detect the Viptera toxin in such grain. Any detection can result in rejection. One provider of check strips for Vip3A in bulk grain is Romer Labs (http://www.romerlabs.com/en/products/agrastrip.html).
3. The Viptera toxin will also be detected in distiller's grains made from Viptera corn, and distiller's grains are sold to China.
4. Syngenta is suggesting three options for the time being while the legal system considers this matter. A) delivering to elevators accepting the Viptera trait, B) delivering to local feedlots, feed mills or ethanol plants that do not export Dried Distillers Grains to China, and C) storing Viptera corn until the Chinese export approval is received. It is expected in March 2012. (This paragraph was paraphrased from a Syngenta letter to corn growers.)

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**Moth Trap Catches**

Note the difference in the scale for Southwestern corn borer numbers compared to the other two moths.

Southwestern corn borer moth (SWCB) activity appears to be dropping off and should be coming to an end soon. Corn hybrids with any of the Bt genes for lepidopteran pests will provide excellent control. Larvae will tunnel into the stalk of non-Bt corn hybrids and once in the stalk are protected from insecticide applications. These caterpillars will tunnel to the base of the stalk and prepare to overwinter. In their preparation larvae girdle the inside of the stalk from 2 to 6 inches above the soil surface (Photo on page 3). This weakens the stalk and will likely lodge. Lodging can be severe and often occurs after September 10 for the Texas High Plains (Photo on page 3). With the long extended and high activity of SWCB moths, particularly, in Deaf Smith, Dallam, and Sherman Counties some susceptible fields even after being treated may have survival of caterpillars. In this situation, harvesting as quickly as possible may reduce yield losses before there is excess lodging. An estimate of infested stalks can be determined by splitting open 50 to 100 stalks down to the root crown (10 consecutive stalks from several locations) and examining for presence of larvae and number of plants girdled.

Fall Armyworm (FAW) moth activity has been sporadic for the last few weeks. But for the past three weeks, Lipscomb County is reporting more activity than the other counties in the Panhandle.


Viptera Corn
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We do not expect this to be a significant problem in the Panhandle, and to date there are no reports of grain elevators in the Texas High Plains planning to reject delivery of Viptera corn. But, as further developments occur, anyone who is growing Viptera corn should contact their grain buyer to determine whether the grain will be accepted at the elevator. Additionally, if any grain elevators are not going to accept Viptera corn, or are going to dock for it, it would be a good idea to consider testing other types of corn grown near Viptera corn fields in order to determine whether "pollen contamination" has occurred at detectable levels.

There is a full article on this issue in AG Professional at http://www.agprofessional.com/newsletters/agpro-weekly/articles/Viptera-corn-being-rejected-by-grain-buyers-127724248.html

This article was prepared by Dr. Pat Porter and Dr. Ed Bynum, Extension Entomologists with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service.

Moth Trapping
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Past newsletter have reported an increase in FAW from Lubbock, Plainview and over to Muleshoe. But, this week Dr. Pat Porter is capturing up to 300 FAW moths per night in traps at the Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Center in Lubbock. He is anticipating up to 1,000 to 2,000 moths being caught for the week. FAW activity in our area may increase which will require close monitoring of fields for egg masses and larvae.

Western Bean Cutworm (WBC) traps continue to show moth activity this past week remains very low.

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