

Monsanto's New RNA Interference GMO Corn Has Been Approved by The EPA

written by GEG | August 9, 2017



The EPA has approved a new kind of genetically engineered corn, named SmartStax Pro. It has a built-in pesticide that targets rootworms, by disrupting one of their genes. The corn will contain Bt toxin, which is a pesticide inside the plant, and DvSnf7 dsRNA, both of which are newcomers to human digestion. [Monsanto says it never tested glyphosate for cancer, but we must consider the possibility that it did do so and then buried the unwanted findings. Either way – failed to test, or hid the test – would you trust the company to do responsible testing on its new RNAi corn?] –GEG

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently and quietly approved Monsanto's new genetic engineering technology, known as RNAi. [1]

The insecticide DvSnf7 dsRNA is not sprayed on crops. Instead, instructions for manufacturing it in the DNA of the crop itself must be encoded in crops. The plants' self-made DvSnf7 dsRNA disrupts a crucial gene in western corn rootworms – a major threat to corn – and kills the pests.

All that's left after that is RNA interference, or RNAi, and the EPA approved this final step in making corn rootworm-resistant in mid-June 2017. RNAi was the source of both hype and controversy just a few years ago, *The Atlantic* reports. But the EPA so quietly approved the technology that the media and environmental groups barely noticed.

The first DvSnf7 dsRNA product will be used in SmartStax Pro genetically modified corn seeds made in collaboration between the world's top agrotech giants, Monsanto and Dow. Monsanto will supply the RNAi technology, and it already has its eye on several RNAi applications. The company expects corn seed with RNAi to be on the market by the end of this decade.

The western corn rootworm is known as the “billion dollar pest” because of the damage it wreaks on cornfields. The insect keeps becoming resistant to the other insecticides that farmers use against it – including the kind you spray on crops *and* corn genetically modified to produce Bt toxin, another technology commercialized by Monsanto.

The SmartStax Pro corn will contain both Bt toxin and DvSnf7 dsRNA.

RNAi works by “turning off” 1 specific gene in 1 specific species by leaving other crops unharmed, at least theoretically. In nature, plants and animals use this process to “silence” their own genes. The technology has already been used to create genetically modified apples and **potatoes that don't brown**. (The apples, **called Arctic Apples**, are expected to reach supermarkets in the U.S. by the end of 2017.)

However, with Monsanto and Dow's GMO corn, the DvSnf7 dsRNA silences a gene in another living organism, in this case the western corn rootworm. It modifies its environment, rather than itself.

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