

## Talking Points on Genetically Modified (GM) Alfalfa

- **GM alfalfa is unnecessary and unwanted.** It will harm family farming in Canada and remove many organic foods from our grocery store shelves.
- Contamination from GM alfalfa is inevitable because bees carry alfalfa pollen.
- GM alfalfa contamination is a serious threat to organic farming. Many organic farmers rely on alfalfa as part of their farming system – organic dairy farmers and livestock farmers in particular. Organic rules do not allow GM crops or GM animal feed. Contamination from GM alfalfa threatens organic certification.
- Conventional farmers agree that they don't want GM alfalfa. Contamination from GM alfalfa threatens our export markets. Canada is the world's largest exporter of dehydrated alfalfa products.

## Information Points on Genetically Modified (GM) Alfalfa

### Who Owns GM Alfalfa?

- Monsanto holds the patent on GM alfalfa (Monsanto owns the GM technology).
- But a company called Forage Genetics International (FGI) will sell the GM alfalfa seeds. FGI has applied Monsanto's genetically modified Roundup Ready (herbicide resistant) technology to alfalfa.

### When Will GM Alfalfa be Approved in Canada?

- No one knows when GM alfalfa will get close to market.
- GM alfalfa was approved as safe by Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in 2005 but it is not yet legal to sell GM alfalfa seeds in Canada.
- There is one more step before GM alfalfa seeds are legal in Canada: GM alfalfa needs "variety registration" before the seeds can be legally sold in Canada. The company could request variety registration and start this process at any time.
- GM alfalfa was approved for planting in the United States in January 2010.

### Alfalfa is Unique

- Alfalfa is consumed directly as human food, such as alfalfa sprouts for sandwiches and salads or the alfalfa in green health shakes, but it also plays an important role in the production of grains, dairy and meat.
- Alfalfa is high-protein food – pasture and hay - for dairy cows and beef cattle as well as lambs, pigs and even honeybees and horses! Alfalfa is a "forage" crop which means that it has an important role in feeding animals: alfalfa is popularly called "Queen of Forages".
- Alfalfa improves soil quality and soil fertility because it fixes the important nutrient nitrogen into the soil. This means that farmers can use alfalfa to reduce or eliminate the use of chemical fertilizers.
- Alfalfa is an important product for export. The Canadian alfalfa processing industry creates alfalfa pellets and cubes for export to feed livestock in other countries like Japan.
- Alfalfa is insect-pollinated which means that insects collect the alfalfa pollen (from purple alfalfa flowers) and distribute it to other individual plants.