

ADM to offer premium to grow non-genetic soy

CHICAGO, May 5 (Reuters) - Major grain processor Archer Daniels Midland Co. (ADM - news) said Wednesday it will pay farmers a premium price for soybeans grown with a certain non-genetically altered variety of seed.

The soybeans, known as Synchrony Treated Soybeans (STS), are produced by DuPont Co. (DD - news), and are bred to resist Synchrony herbicide, also produced by DuPont. Farmers participating in the STS program would receive an 18-cent per bushel premium over the Decatur, Ill., market price for soybeans, Martin Andreas, senior vice president for Decatur-based ADM, said in an interview.

Andreas said the program offers farmers a way to avoid the recent problems revolving around genetically-modified crops, also referred to as GMO (genetically modified organism) crops. The program took effect on April 27,

Andreas said. "He's got a home for his product, he's got a good premium price, and he's taken out of the political difficulties surrounding the GMO issue," said Andreas. "I think it's a pretty decent program for the farmer."

Genetically modified crops have rapidly grown in popularity among U.S. farmers in recent years, but have met resistance in the U.S.' major markets overseas, such as Europe and Asia. Resistance revolves primarily around over whether food products containing genetically modified crops are entirely safe for human consumption.

For example, Roundup Ready soybeans, a product of Monsanto Co. (MTC - news), are genetically modified to resist Monsanto's Roundup Ready herbicide. The STS variety could be exported about anywhere in the world, because it is not genetically modified, Andreas said. According to Andreas, DuPont expects to offer contracts to plant STS on 9

million to 10 million acres this year. U.S. soybean acreage this year is expected to total about 73 million acres. Most of the STS variety would be grown in Illinois, with some in Iowa and Indiana, Andreas said.

Consumer Pressure Forces Gerber Baby Foods to Eliminate GE Corn & Soybeans from US Products

Headline: Baby Food Maker Cautious on Grain

Wire Service: APO (AP Online)

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SUMMIT, N.J. (AP) -- The maker of Gerber baby food is dropping suppliers who use genetic engineering in their corn and soybean products, the company's chief executive officer confirmed today.

The move by Novartis follows a request from the environmental group Greenpeace for information on the company's use of bioengineered products. The company was evaluating their use before then, said Al Piergallini, president and CEO of its North American consumer

health division, based in Summit. Novartis plans to drop some of the company's grain suppliers this summer in favor of producers who do not use gene alteration to make corn and soybeans resistant to pests and weedkilling chemicals. Those ingredients account for less than 2 percent of Gerber's products, mainly dry cereal, Piergallini said.

Greenpeace fears possible health risks associated with genetically engineered foods, though Novartis officials said they still believe their existing Gerber products are safe.

Novartis said it was turning to other suppliers anyway, and is taking its changes a step further by adding a new promise to try to use only organic -- pesticide- and herbicide-free -- ingredients in Gerber products. "We want a mother to buy our product and have no concerns," Piergallini said. "We've always tried to figure out if there were any concerns that troubled those people."

Two other baby-food makers, H.J. Heinz Co. of Pittsburgh and Poway, Calif.-based Healthy Time Natural Foods, have made similar product changes in response to the Greenpeace concerns. The move by Novartis was first reported by the Wall Street Journal. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has said that, so far, it has found no particular health problems with genetically modified agricultural products, concluding that they "are as safe as other foods in the grocery store."

The British Medical Association has expressed concerns about possible ill health effects from bioengineered ingredients. European fears of genetic engineering have led to a trade dispute over importing of U.S. agricultural products. Greenpeace makes no particular claims that genetically modified foods are dangerous to humans or the environment, arguing simply that the health risks are unknown. "Some of the effects may be subtle," a supporter of the Greenpeace campaign, Boston pediatric neurologist Martha Herbert, told the Journal. "The problem with studying this is that the effects may be long-term."

Greenpeace activists also demand label information about such content. Gerber is exploring its labeling options for its new organic products. Gerber is the nation's largest maker of baby food, producing 5.5 million jars per day and annual worldwide sales of \$1 billion.

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