Weed management practices changing for producers

Increased prices and decreased availability of herbicides impact producers

By Shelby Varner, K-State Research and Extension news

MANHATTAN, Kan. – A Kansas State University weed management specialist says increased prices and decreased availability of herbicides may force farmers into finding alternative ways of managing weeds in their fields.

“Producers have got some tough decisions to make this winter as they think about how they’re going to manage things coming into the spring,” said K-State’s Sarah Lancaster.

She added that “significant shortages” of glyphosate and glufosinate are anticipated in 2022. “Some of the distributors that I’ve talked with actually are talking about the situation not being cleared up by 2023,” Lancaster said.

Lancaster said those forces will require changing how business is done without herbicides. She said it may be a good test run if -- years down the road -- herbicide resistance prevents the post-emergence herbicides from working.

In the meantime, Lancaster urges producers to consider implementing practices to make sure that the herbicides being used are effective. They include:

- Check equipment every day before spraying, including nozzles.
- Adjust the speed of the vehicle you are driving while spraying. “When you drop the driving speed, you’re allowing more of your herbicide to hit the intended target,” Lancaster said.
- Add water to increase the spray volume of the herbicide.
“As we think about ways to take the pressure off the post-emergence products, having a solid pre-emergence herbicide program is important,” Lancaster said. “That includes multiple effective modes of action, especially for things like pigweeds, but also for other weeds that have kind of slipped through the cracks the last few years.”

In addition, Lancaster said optimizing planting dates, optimizing seeding rates, seeding depth, and fertility may help give the crop a competitive edge over weeds. Non-chemical weed management practices – such as weed electrocution, a method in which weeds are shocked with thousands of volts of electricity – may also be worth considering, she said.

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