



Northeast
Agribusiness
& Feed Alliance

Treated Seeds

Background:

Seed treatments are the precise application of biological organisms, products and/or chemical ingredients to suppress, control, or repel plant pathogens, insects, or other pests that attack seeds, seedlings or plants. Commonly used seed treatments are insecticides, fungicides and nematicides.

What are their benefits?

Seed treatments play a critical role in agriculture and the production of healthy crops. Because of their targeted accuracy, they selectively control pests, while ensuring beneficial insects remain available to keep other potential insect pests in check. Their safe and targeted use provides an efficient use of pesticides and reduces the amount of chemicals used on large areas of farmland. Because they're planted below the soil surface, treated seeds help minimize the exposure of pesticides to off-target plants and animals.

How are treated seeds regulated?

All pesticides used as seed treatments are approved for that use. Pesticides undergo roughly 100 safety studies before they are approved. As EPA reviews the use of a pesticide for specific crops, the approval of the use of the pesticide as a seed treatment for those crops is part of that registration process. Since seed is already regulated by USDA and individual states, further regulating seed as a pesticide would put a tremendous burden on growers, with no additional proven benefit to health or the environment. Many other products are regulated in this manner, such as lumber, telephone poles and kitchen sponges.

Seed treatments are safe. Seed treatments, such as those with neonicotinoid pesticides, undergo rigorous testing and EPA review prior to being permitted to be used commercially. The EPA carefully considers effects on many non-pest organisms, including honeybees, when they approve new insecticides for use. EPA data has shown low risk to pollinators from treated seed in recent assessments.

Why have farmers embraced seed treatments?

- Improved seedling emergence and health, especially in no-till or conservation tillage situations.
- Viable alternative to foliar and soil applications.
- Protection against some above and below-ground pests including some that introduce fungal, bacterial, and viral disease.
- Reduction or elimination in the number of insecticide foliar sprays due to targeted protection against insect pests.
- Higher crop yields, and reduction in the use of natural resources, energy, money and labor.
- Protection for seeds and seedlings against some of the risks associated with early season planting pests.
- A more efficient use of pesticides and other chemicals.

Seed treatments are an important part of farmers' integrated pest management plans. Seed treatments have been rigorously tested and proven to be a safe and effective tool contributing to the more efficient production of food, fiber and fuel.

Request:

Take no action to further regulate treated seed. Senate bill S.2002 (Hoylman) would require the NY DEC to regulate treated seed. The CAO and its members oppose S.2002.