

Kansas farmer sues Monsanto over GM wheat (Update)

June 4 2013



Wheat ready for harvest is seen September 29, 2010, near Tioga, North Dakota. A Kansas wheat farmer has sued Monsanto after news of the discovery of unapproved genetically modified wheat on an Oregon farm, alleging harm from falling wheat prices.

A Kansas wheat farmer has sued Monsanto after news of the discovery of unapproved genetically modified wheat on an Oregon farm, alleging harm from falling wheat prices.

The farmer, Ernest Barnes, lodged a civil lawsuit in a US federal court against Monsanto on Monday, alleging "gross negligence" and seeking compensation for damages.

Susman Godfrey, the law firm representing Barnes, said other cases were expected to be filed soon and would likely be consolidated in a class-action suit.

"The case may be the first of many Monsanto faces over alleged wheat contamination," the firm said in a statement.

"We are committed to making sure that any consolidation occurs where farmers are directly impacted," Susman Godfrey lawyer Warren Burns told AFP.

Barnes, is seeking compensation for damages of more than \$100,000, according to the complaint.

Because of the discovery of Monsanto's genetically modified wheat, "farmers are now facing sharply declining prices and outright bans on the importation of their wheat in foreign countries," it said.

Monsanto dismissed the lawsuit as groundless.

"Plaintiffs are taking a wild swing that is unlikely to connect," the company said in a statement.

"Tractor-chasing lawyers have prematurely filed suit without any evidence of fault and in advance of the crop's harvest," said David Snively, Monsanto's general counsel.

Following the announcement late last Wednesday, Japan suspended part of its US wheat imports as did South Korean millers, and the European

Union said it would test wheat imported from the United States before allowing it to be sold.

The Department of Agriculture was still investigating the appearance of the rogue strain of wheat, the first report of it in the nine years since Monsanto ended its testing of the strain.

The department meanwhile has insisted that the US wheat crop is safe and stated repeatedly that there was no indication that the strain had "entered commerce".

While wheat futures prices fell immediately after US officials announced the discovery, they quickly rebounded.

Wheat closed at \$7.09 a bushel Tuesday, compared with about \$6.93 a week ago.

The United States produces 10 percent of world wheat and is consistently the world's biggest wheat exporter.

And Kansas, in the Midwest heartland, was the country's second-largest exporter of wheat in 2011 by state, with exports of \$1.5 billion.

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