



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ASA Welcomes USDA Announcement on Plant Breeding Innovations

WASHINGTON (April 5, 2018) - The American Soybean Association (ASA) registered strong support of a recent announcement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that it has no plans to regulate plants that could be developed through traditional breeding techniques, including genome editing. ASA President John Heisdorffer, a farmer from Keota, Iowa, issued the following statement on Tuesday:

"ASA commends Secretary Perdue and USDA for their decision to clarify that plant breeding innovations will be treated in a similar manner as plants developed through traditional breeding methods. This science-based approach encourages innovation and economic development. Farmers, small agribusinesses, researchers, and others will have the exciting opportunity to pursue new and advanced ways to grow our food, fight plant pests and disease, reduce reliance of fertilizers and other resources, and respond to consumer demands to reduce the impact of agriculture on the environment.

"It will also facilitate the development of new and beneficial crop traits by reducing the cost and time required to bring products to the marketplace. This, in turn, will give a boost to continuing efforts to meet the food needs of the world's growing population, estimated to reach 9.7 billion by 2050.

"At the same time, making the regulatory process more predictable for new technologies will require close coordination between APHIS and EPA and FDA, the agencies that share responsibility under the Coordinated Framework for the Regulation of Biotechnology, to prevent any bottlenecks. This decision also will require the federal government to take a lead role in working with other countries to ensure that they adopt science-based regulatory systems that are consistent with that of the U.S. This effort must be a top priority for the administration and pursued without delay to bring about a coherent international regulatory environment in which these gene-edited commodities will not face unnecessary hurdles in the global supply chain.

"We appreciate USDA's role in the regulation of biotechnology and Secretary Perdue's confirmation that plant breeding innovations, which can be developed through traditional breeding techniques, are separate and distinct in both the science and risk to plant health. By taking this science- and risk-based approach, it allows USDA to focus its time and resources on those plant varieties that actually could pose a risk to plant health.

"Consumer interest in how their food is produced continues to evolve, and it is important that we evolve similarly to meet those needs, and that our rules and regulations reflect that trend. ASA stands ready to participate in efforts by the administration to move ahead with this initiative in the coming weeks and months."

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The American Soybean Association (ASA) represents all U.S. soybean farmers on domestic and international policy issues important to the soybean industry. ASA has 26 affiliated state associations representing 30 soybean producing states and more than 300,000 soybean farmers.

For more information contact:

Patrick Delaney, ASA Communications Director, 202-969-7040, pdelaney@soy.org

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