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DELTA WEED WORKERS MEETING SOBERING

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Every fall, weed scientists from Mid-South universities gather for a round table discussion of weed control issues. Over the last three years there were exciting discussions about herbicide-resistant rice and how red rice could finally be controlled.

This year the mood was distinctly different. Three things have happened. First, the Liberty Link rice system appears to be stalled- perhaps permanently. Secondly, the Clearfield/Newpath system provided good, but not perfect red rice control. In a few instances there were failures. Finally, numerous occurrences of Clearfield-Red Rice cross breeding were discovered in worst-case test plots.

The bottom line is that the Clearfield/Newpath system is very sensitive to abuse. If rice is growing without crop rotation and there is a Newpath failure, Newpath resistant red rice will probably be produced in that field, and will thrive if the grower continues to grow Newpath rice.

Newpath is still a valuable asset; but we need to modify our mind-set. Clearfield/Newpath is not THE solution to Red Rice problems. Persons with severe red rice infestations need to rotate as much as ever with the-two-years-of-soybeans-to-one-year-of-rice rotation. Use Clearfield/Newpath that one year of rice, but then get back to beans. If anything, rotation is more important with this system.

The BASF folks are stressing that soil applications of Newpath need to be flushed. This is primarily because our results- with limited flushing- have been bad; while Ford Baldwin's results- with optimal flushing- have been good. A lot of Missouri rice farmers don't want to flush because cold water plus April temperatures plus April showers can kill a stand of rice. Worse yet- we tend to get good results from unflushed Facet even though flushing is recommended with it. With Newpath, you probably need to keep things wet enough that you start asking yourself if it's the water or the herbicide that's providing the weed control. It is very important to set the stage with the first application if the second application is going to finish the job.

Also we are not certain if this system should be used on a heavy gumbo type soil. The Arkansas folks feel strongly that it should be incorporated ahead of planting and incorporation on a heavy clay can be something of a joke. BASF is suggesting that Facet be included to add barnyardgrass control, but this will do nothing to improve red rice control- which needs to be as close to 100% as is possible.

While we are stressing rotation with Newpath, we need to be politically correct and say that overuse of any herbicide, or weed control systems runs the risk of some sort of resistance mechanism. Our neighbors in Arkansas have lots of propanil-resistant barnyardgrass and are

now finding isolated patches of Facet-resistant barnyardgrass. These cases developed after repeated use of those herbicides with limited crop and herbicide rotation. Roundup burndown, Roundup beans, Roundup cotton and Roundup corn is another situation we need to be mindful of.

Whether it's Newpath, Propanil or something completely different, producers need to keep their eyes open for problems and avoid overusing any one weed control system. Growers using the Clearfield/Newpath system need to manage it exactly perfect and rogue any escapes. They- more than anyone else- need to rotate to soybeans and then use old-fashioned red rice control measures. If we're careful, we can grow a cleaner rice crop for years to come. If not, it'll be a nice three to five years and then it's back to nothing but crop rotation.