



## **Backgrounder:**

### **CSTA Position Statement on Adventitious Presence**

Canadian seed companies have engaged in international trade of seed for many years. The foundation of this trade has been stringent international standards that demand seed purity and varietal purity levels in the range of 98 to 99%.

However, the international trade of seed is threatened by the lack of international standards surrounding the adventitious presence of non-approved genetic events in seed. It is important to note that unapproved does not mean that the genetic event is rejected – it simply means that it may not be approved because the importing country has no approval process in place. In some cases, the event is not approved because the varieties or species containing the event are not crops grown in the importing country (i.e. cotton is not grown in Canada).

Regulatory authorities have implicitly stated that the threshold level for unapproved events is zero, effectively establishing a commercially impossible standard of 100% genetic purity. This is unachievable and runs counter to long-standing global standards for several reasons:

- The seed industry has never claimed 100% purity, nor is that our domestic standard. In Canada, seed purity thresholds are generally 99 to 99.75%.
- There is currently no harmonized approval procedure in place for cross-border seed trade. Specifically, there is currently no international policy or tolerance for unintended adventitious presence in seed shipments. While threshold levels continue to be the subject of ongoing debate, the International Seed Federation and several countries (Canada, U.S. and Argentina) argue that anything less than 1% would not be practical or achievable.
- There is also a lack of standardized and validated testing procedures. Some tests can determine the presence of adventitious material up to extremely low levels. A test that claims to be able to detect levels as small as 0.001% is the equivalent of one corn plant in four acres.

CSTA is currently working with international industry and governmental organizations to harmonize the assessment procedures among countries and standardize international testing procedures and tolerances.



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## **Definition of Adventitious Presence: What is the Meaning of "Adventitious Presence"?**

Adventitious presence means accidental, unintentional presence. It is commonly used to characterize seed lots, e.g. adventitious presence in a seed lot of "off-types" not conforming to the description of the variety.

A low level of adventitious presence of off-types is unavoidable in biological processes such as seed production. In national and international seed regulations, there are recognized standards for the level of adventitious presence of off-types. These standards are typically based on visual assessment of the seed production field and the resulting seed lot.

Source: International Seed Federation Web site [www.worldseed.org/FAQap.htm](http://www.worldseed.org/FAQap.htm)