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Rely® 280 Herbicide Update

In May 2024, we alerted the industry that the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) had finally approved the herbicide Rely® 280 (glufosinate-ammonium) for use in avocado groves in California. The process to get Rely® registered had taken about five years and was a much-needed tool for California avocado growers to manage glyphosate (Roundup®) resistant weeds.

Unfortunately, in late August we received word that BASF, the manufacturer of Rely®, had “chosen to discontinue production of Rely Herbicide.” This was shocking information to receive given the time that had been invested in obtaining this registration. And as we learned, it was a decision that was just as surprising to our contacts at BASF who had worked closely with us on the registration process.

What Happened to Rely®?

According to our contacts within BASF two primary factors contributed to BASF’s decision to stop producing Rely®. The first factor was a federal court decision in February 2024 that revoked the registration of dicamba herbicide for use on cotton and soybeans. This led to more farmers growing LibertyLink® soybeans, which have been genetically modified to be resistant to BASF’s Liberty® herbicide. Liberty® just happens to have the same active ingredient, glufosinate-ammonium, as Rely®.

The second factor that influenced BASF’s decision is the availability of generic glufosinate-ammonium

herbicides in the horticulture and specialty crops industries (avocados are a specialty crop). The availability of these generics greatly reduced the price of glufosinate-ammonium herbicides, presumably reducing BASF’s profits from Rely®.

These two factors led BASF to shift their glufosinate-ammonium supply to their Liberty® product and discontinue production of Rely®.

Where Does This Leave Avocado Growers?

Rely® is still registered for use on avocados and is legal for use as long as supplies last. Importantly, Rely® is the only glufosinate-ammonium herbicide legal for use on avocados in California. No generic glufosinate-ammonium herbicides can be used. Also, it is unlikely that growers will find Rely® with an updated label that has avocados listed. Thus, growers must have a copy of the DPR approved supplemental label in their possession when using Rely®. The DPR approved label has a stamp on it with the wording “LABELING ACCEPTABLE State of California Department of Pesticide Regulation Pesticide Registration” and can be found on the CAC grower website here: (<https://www.californiaavocadogrowers.com/sites/default/files/Rely-280-NVA-2022-04-0598-0238-avocado.pdf>).

Our understanding is that the supply of Rely® in the marketplace is good, but as it is used up growers may find it is out of stock at their local ag chemical dealer and may need to look elsewhere to find it. If able, growers



Weed management had become a struggle for many growers dealing with glyphosate resistant weeds, such as hairy fleabane. Glufosinate-ammonium was a much needed tool in situations like this. Photo credit: Danny Klittich.

are encouraged to purchase a supply of Rely® to carry them through at least the next six months.

Will Glufosinate-ammonium Be Available Again?

Currently, it is unknown what BASF’s long-term plans are for Rely®. They could resume production in the future, they could choose to sell the label to another manufacturer, or they could do nothing. In the interim, the California Avocado Commission has had a conversation with DPR and explained the situation. DPR is open to considering a 24(c) special local needs (SLN) registration for a generic glufosinate-ammonium product. CAC has reached out to a number of manufacturers to try to find one who is willing to support the SLN registration. Once we have their support, we will submit a packet to DPR for review and are hopeful we will have a replacement for Rely® available in early 2025.

While an SLN registration is not a permanent solution, it will buy us time so we can learn what BASF’s long-term plans are and, based on BASF’s plans, plot a course forward to another full registration. 🍌