WEED MANAGEMENT IN SWEETCORN

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Weed control in sweetcorn relies on the use of a small number of herbicides, principally atrazine and metolachlor. Despite providing control of most broadleaf weed species current herbicide strategies are weak on some grass weeds such as *Echinochloa crus-galli* (L.) P.Beauv. Current herbicide strategies also have a strong reliance on atrazine, which controls most common broadleaf weeds in Sweetcorn. However this product is causing public concern and it is possible that it may be taken off the market. The narrow range of products, also favours the build up of herbicide resistance in weed species.

This work is being conducted as a three year Horticultural Research and Development Corporation (HRDC) funded project and aims to develop a number of alternative herbicides for use in sweetcorn. The main areas of focus are in improving grass weed control and also to develop products which offer an alternative to atrazine. Trials were conducted in sweetcorn production areas across Australia to gain efficacy and crop tolerance data across a range of environments, crop varieties and weed spectra.

The most promising products identified from this project are the pre emergent products dimethenamid and RP97001. Dimethenamid has excellent grass weed activity and also some broad leaf weed activity. RP97001 has activity on a wide range of broadleaf weeds and also has some grass activity. These products are also compatible as a tank mix. Both pre emergent products consistently give lower levels of crop damage than post emergent herbicides, currently used in sweetcorn. Data is being collected to allow registration of suitable products identified from this work.