

# How best to tackle dicamba drift problems in Arkansas?

A look at proposals being considered by the State Plant Board  
Aug 1, 2016 [David Bennett](#) | Delta Farm Press

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- Arkansas officials looking at ways to deal with dicamba drift.
- Range of proposals explored.



The desperate need to control herbicide-resistant pigweeds is a key factor driving illegal dicamba spraying of Xtend soybeans in the Mid-South.

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While only 25 drift complaints have been filed in Arkansas, Susie Nichols has fielded an abundance of calls from farmers wanting state officials to tackle off-target dicamba damage.

“In the grand scheme, (25 complaints) is not a lot,” said the Arkansas Plant Board Division Manager on July 19. “Here’s the thing, though: lots of people are calling wanting something done. They just don’t want to file a complaint because their neighbors are friends, their kids play together and they attend the same church. I understand that approach and encourage folks to work things out, if possible. They may want to work it out among themselves but they *still* want (the Plant Board) to act.”

Six days later, on July 25, a well-attended meeting at the Plant Board’s Little Rock headquarters addressed the burgeoning drift problem. While no one “was disrespectful” during proceedings, there were some pointed questions. “It’s fair to say this is a not a situation that can be easily resolved.”

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What came out of the meeting?

- The committee first dealt with Dow AgroSciences’ Enlist technology.

“There was a proposal for a buffer zone in 2017 between a field to be treated and cotton to be a half-mile. That’s currently not in the regulations.”

- The committee then moved to Monsanto’s Roundup Ready Xtend.

“They want the product M1691 to be prohibited for use in the state of Arkansas,” says Nichols. “Even if the EPA approves it for 2017, Arkansas wants to prohibit its use altogether. M1691 is a product, similar to Clarity, they hope to use on their technology until the VaporGrip technology becomes available.”

- The committee also wants a buffer zone between a field to be treated and soybeans when applying Roundup Xtend and VaporGrip technology.

“They haven’t settled on a buffer zone yet but are researching whether it should be a mile or a half-mile.”

## **Tying sales**

- The committee wants to look into regulations regarding weed control systems.

“They want to know if there’s a way to tie seed sales to the sale of pesticides,” says Nichols. “The thought is they want to make sure the proper pesticide is purchased along with the seed. It’ll take some research and meetings with lawyers before we can come up with an answer on that.”

What about the ability to track dicamba sales? That was talked about earlier this year.

“We do have regulations in place now that say dealers are supposed to record sales of dicamba products,” says Nichols. “And those using dicamba have certain record-keeping requirements. It’s pretty much the same as the current regulations on 2,4-D.

“It’s only been in place for several months now, and I don’t know how well it’s working. People can go make purchases on the internet or from other states. So, those who want to skirt the rules can do so.”

Even though there are only 25 official drift complaints, “our inspectors are telling me there are soybeans all over the state with dicamba damage. There’s a ballpark figure of 200,000 acres of damage in the Bootheel, Tennessee and Arkansas combined.”

Nichols is in the process of quickly setting up another Plant Board meeting. “There will definitely be one in August and we’re trying to get an early date set. There are many steps to go through before January 1.

“All of this will have to go back to the committee, then the full board, and then the governor has to approve it as well as the legislative council. So, we’re close to the beginning of the process.”