



## GROWING CERTIFIED WEED-FREE FORAGE AND MULCH IN THE MIDWEST: A FACT SHEET FOR PRODUCERS

### **What are certified weed-free products?**

Weed-free forage (hay) and mulch (usually straw) are produced throughout the country. Certified weed-free products have been inspected and confirmed to be free of the seeds of specific weed species. Each state in the Midwest has a certification program that is run by the state Crop Improvement Association, using standards developed by the North American Weed Management Association (NAWMA).

### **Why grow certified weed-free products?**

When forage and mulch crops contain seeds of noxious weed or invasive plant species, those species can spread into areas where the forage or mulch is used. Managers of roadsides, rights-of-way, or natural areas may want to use weed-free products to help prevent the introduction of harmful species and save money on future weed control costs.

### **How can I get my crop certified, and how much will it cost?**

Each state in the Midwest has a weed-free forage and mulch certification program that is administered by the state Crop Improvement Association (CIA). The CIAs all use the standards set by NAWMA, but details of the inspection program, as well as the cost for certification, vary from state to state. For more information on the certification program in your state, contact your state CIA.

### **If I grow weed-free products, how can I be sure that someone will buy them?**

If you would like to grow weed-free products, start by contacting your state Crop Improvement Association. They can put you in touch with buyers who have contacted them looking for a source of weed-free products. The best way to ensure that you will have a buyer for your weed-free products is to contract directly with a buyer. Different buyers may have different requirements for species to be excluded from the crop depending on the location and land ownership.

### **How will I know which weed species have to be excluded from the weed-free products that I grow and what procedures I will have to follow for certification?**

NAWMA maintains a master list of species that may not be included in forage or mulch in order for the crop to be certified as weed-free. Each state also adds their state noxious weeds to the list. The NAWMA list can be found at [www.nawma.org](http://www.nawma.org). Visit your state Crop Improvement Association's website to see additional species for your state. The NAWMA guidelines also include procedures for the inspection process.

### **How can I indicate that my products have been certified as weed-free?**

When your crop is inspected, the inspector will issue an inspection certificate, as well as tags for your bales containing the words "North American Weed Free Forage Certification Program, Certified to the North American Standards". The inspector will also provide you with purple and yellow twine issued by NAWMA that you can use to label your bales. The tags and twine will distinguish your products from other products that are not certified as weed-free.

### **How much will it cost me to produce weed-free products, and what is the financial benefit?**

The price of weed-free products varies greatly from place to place and from year to year as with all crops. Contracting directly with a buyer will allow you to negotiate a price that is acceptable to both you and the buyer. The fees to enroll in the certification program vary from state to state. Buyers will likely be willing to pay a little more for weed-free products in order to save money on controlling weed or invasive plant infestations in the future.

### **For more information, please visit:**

-North American Weed Management Association, [www.nawma.org](http://www.nawma.org)

-Crop Improvement Associations:

- Illinois: [www.ilcrop.com](http://www.ilcrop.com)
- Indiana: [www.indianacrop.org](http://www.indianacrop.org)
- Iowa: [www.agron.iastate.edu/ICIA/](http://www.agron.iastate.edu/ICIA/)
- Michigan: [www.michcrop.com](http://www.michcrop.com)
- Minnesota: [www.mncia.org](http://www.mncia.org)
- Missouri: [www.moseed.org](http://www.moseed.org)
- Ohio: [www.ohseed.org](http://www.ohseed.org)
- Wisconsin: [www.wisc.edu/wcia/](http://www.wisc.edu/wcia/)