

Clover Seed

legumin osae (Trifolium)

Fast Facts:

Acres in Washington: about 500
Percent of U.S. Acreage: about 10%
Number of Growers: 3
Per acre Value: \$400-800

Description of crop:

Clover seed is planted late February to mid-April. Fall plantings are possible, but plants may suffer winter injury. Harvest occurs typically in late August. The fields are grown and harvested for two years. Clover beds are inoculated with nitrogen-fixing bacteria to ensure nodulation. Bumblebees pollinate clover, but honey bees are typically brought to the field to supplement their work. In the past 10 years, up to 5,000 acres of clover seed were produced in Washington, however due to heavy production in other areas and lower demand for the seed, acreage has declined significantly. Only 3 companies are contracting for seed in Washington.

Key pests:

The clover head aphid is the most critical insect pest in clover seed. Lygus bugs are a minor problem and cutworms are a problem for new seedlings. Weed seeds such as dodder, field bindweed, hoary cress, perennial pepperweed, Johnsongrass, mustards, lambsquarter, knapweed, sandbur, pigweeds, alkali sida, curly dock and other species of clover are difficult to remove from the clover seed. Weeds are also a problem since they may attract bees away from the clover seed and serve as a host to lygus bugs. Diseases are not a major problem in clover seed.

Key pesticides:

The clover head aphid, lygus bugs and cutworms can be controlled with Lorsban or Brigade. Lorsban is highly toxic to bees and should not be applied to clover in bloom. Weeds can be controlled with a variety of herbicides such as Eptam, 2, 4-DB, Treflan.

Critical pest control issues:

Planting into a clean field is critical to weed control. Control can also be obtained through the development of resistant cultivars. A critical issue in pest control is bee safety as honey bees are used for pollination. Growers are seeking products that will control clover head aphid without damaging bees.

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Location

of production: Clark, and Franklin counties.

