

ASA Urges Additional Testing on LightSquared by FCC

The American Soybean Association (ASA) and a coalition of 12 other national producer groups that represent American farmers and all major crop commodities are urging the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to conduct additional targeted testing to ensure that any potential commercial terrestrial services offered by LightSquared will not cause harmful interference to Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) operations utilized by farmers to facilitate the production of an abundant and dependable food supply.

In January 2011, the FCC gave conditional approval to LightSquared Subsidiary LLC to build tens of thousands of ground stations that may cause interference to GPS signals.

In the agricultural sector, GPS-based technologies are responsible for an estimated \$19 billion in higher annual farm revenue, in addition to considerable safety and environmental benefits. Thus, much is at stake for precision agriculture and this is why comprehensive testing is so important.

It would be totally unacceptable to expect the GPS community including government users, farmers, and other taxpayers to bear any cost for replacing equipment that ceases to function properly if solutions are found enabling LightSquared to move forward. Any costs associated with retrofitting or replacing GPS receivers must be borne by LightSquared.

"As users of GPS precision equipment in agricultural applications, we believe this additional testing is imperative," said ASA First Vice President Steve Wellman, a farmer from Syracuse, Neb. "We need to know with certainty that any modifications and proposed solutions will work for new and existing precision agriculture equipment."

The radio wave spectrum LightSquared plans to use for its system sits in what is known as the L-Band, which is just adjacent to the spectrum which GPS devices use. LightSquared gave initial assurances that its original proposal would not cause interference to the nation's GPS system. However, government and commercial tests demonstrated conclusively that its original network proposal would cause widespread disruption to GPS service.

"ASA noticed in recent public testimony before Congress that key government agencies that rely on GPS all agree that it is unclear whether LightSquared's revised proposal will protect the government functions administered by these agencies from harmful interference," Wellman said. "Agricultural operations that rely extensively on widely deployed GPS receivers and satellite augmentation signals for human safety, productivity, and mitigation of environmental hazards face the same unknown."

Testing must include laboratory and field analysis of LightSquared's proposed solutions, and must adequately examine the full range of scenarios to ensure that the base stations and handheld devices proposed by LightSquared do not degrade GPS receivers.

ASA represents all U.S. soybean farmers on domestic and international issues of importance to the soybean industry. ASA's advocacy efforts are made possible through voluntary dues paying membership in ASA by about 21,000 U.S. soybean farmers. For more information about the American Soybean Association visit www.SoyGrowers.com.



ASA First Vice President Steve Wellman in the cab of his combine during soybean harvest. (ASA photo by Bob Callanan)



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