



Overview

Brightly colored pesticide-treated seeds now dominate American agriculture. Nearly all commercially-available corn and soy seeds are [coated with a pesticide seed treatment](#), and these coatings are also common on crops such as wheat, sugar beets, sunflowers, and squash. These coatings often contain pesticides, microplastics, and PFAS, and are applied [prophylactically](#) (with or without a known pest threat). Further, many pesticides used in these seed treatments are systemic, meant to be absorbed through the entire plant's tissues. Yet only [2% of pesticides used are absorbed](#); the remaining 98% leaches into soil and water, harming pollinators, soil health, and aquatic life. Excess seeds also lack safe disposal mechanisms, because they are not regulated by the EPA as pesticides. Instead, under the "[treated article exemption](#)", they are considered a "treated article" in the same manner as plastic pesticide containers. This status creates minimal regulation, leading to little enforcement of safe-user compliance, no use-reporting of seeds, and frequent pesticide overuse.

Policy Options

- **New York S 1856-A & A 7640 & Vermont H 706 (Enacted 2023 & 2024):** Prohibits the non-emergency use of neonicotinoid-treated seeds for corn, soybean, and wheat agricultural production.
- **Minnesota HF 2310 (Enacted 2024):** Prohibits the disposal of waste-treated seeds inconsistent with their label, as well as burning near select water sources, composting, or incinerating in a dwelling. Prevents storing, handling, distributing, or disposing of treated seeds that can harm humans, food, livestock, fish, or wildlife, or bring unreasonable adverse environmental impacts.
- **Minnesota HF 2761 / SF 3083 (Introduced 2025):** Would order the creation of a systemic pesticide-treated seed program and establish a systemic pesticide-treated seed alternative account. Would mandate that pesticide-treated seeds be added to the state's existing pesticide management plan.
- **Indiana HB 1025 (Introduced 2025):** Would mandate a study on the environmental impacts of certain insecticides on treated seed and a report of recommendations to the legislature.
- **Quebec (Enacted 2019):** Requires farmers to obtain permission (i.e., "verification of need") before using neonicotinoid-treated seeds.

KEY POINTS

- Treated seeds often do not provide economic benefits to the farmers who use them. ([Purdue University](#))
- Neonicotinoid insecticides are the most common pesticides used in treated seed coatings. Yet, coatings often combine additional pesticides such as fungicides, which can amplify neonicotinoids' environmental impact. ([PubMed Central](#))
- Treated seeds harm birds that eat them, can kill pollinators that feed on crops grown from the seeds, and impair soil health and aquatic ecosystems. ([American Bird Conservancy](#); [Science Daily](#); [PubMed Central](#); [Trout Unlimited](#))
- Human health suffers from treated seeds, as the dust from treated seed containers can volatilize into the air and sicken farmworkers. ([PubMed](#))



Other Resources

- **NCEL:** [Pesticides Briefing Book](#)
- **Xerces:** [Overuse of Pesticide-Treated Seed is a Threat to Waterways and Wildlife](#)

