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NEWS RELEASE

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## **Brand or Variety, Are you Buying Different Genetics?**

*By: Jeff Smith, Fleming County Extension Agent for ANR*

Farmers may be purchasing different brands of seed from different companies, but those brands may be the same genetics - - the same variety. There is a difference between "brand" and "variety". Chad Lee, Extension Agronomist, University of Kentucky, emphasizes how important it is to know that difference. A good article on this topic was written by Cindy Finneseth, formerly with the University of Kentucky Regulatory Services, published in Regulatory News, Fourth Quarter of 2010, to read this article go to <http://www.rs.uky.edu/department/newsletters/2010Q4.pdf>

A somewhat recent industry labeling trend is labeling products as a brand or with product number. Seed can be legally branded in Kentucky, but the variety name of the brand must also be declared on the seed label. The label also must clearly differentiate which statement is which by use of the words Variety and Brand. All certified seed, however, is required to be labeled by variety.

A variety description defines characteristics, which can include: plant height, days to maturity, yield characteristics, drought and disease tolerance, and other characteristics, which can be important considerations when selecting seed.

Unfortunately, sometimes brands are misrepresented or misstated as varieties. This is a problem because brand names are generally arbitrarily assigned by a manufacturer for marketing purposes. If seed is sold only by brand name, when growers are faced with options, there is no way to make comparisons. If only a brand name is provided, a grower could unintentionally buy the same variety.

Since 2006, UK Regulatory Services has been collecting variety and brand information for seed lots offered for sale in Kentucky. In reviewing tag information, different companies commonly market the same variety under different brand names. An analysis of variety and brand information indicated that 50 yellow soybean varieties have been marketed under two or more brand names between 2006 and 2010. For corn and wheat, 26 and 8 individual varieties, respectively, have been sold under multiple brand names. As an example, the yellow soybean variety '15049' has been sold under seven different brand names (4970RB, 8509NRR, H-4878RR, V49N6RR, DG4970RR, DSR-8509NRR and Excel 8509NRR).

Another observation is different varieties marketed under the same brand name. For example, both yellow soybean varieties '491718 and '509255' have been sold under the brand 4875 and varieties '4423183' and 'R4452N' as the brand C444R. This labeling scheme is less common, but has been observed in seed lots offered for sale in Kentucky.

It is not unusual to see a brand designation printed on the seed label in larger letters than the variety designation. While this practice is not prohibited, it can be misleading. The legitimate variety designation must always be declared on the tag — clearly and legibly. Buyers should examine labels carefully to be certain of each seed lot's variety.

UK Regulatory Services also has an Excel file listing the brands and varieties they have checked over the years at <http://www.rs.uky.edu/seed/SeedBrandVarietyInfo.php> Take a look and see if the brands you have purchased truly are different genetics.

For more information, contact Jeff Smith at Fleming County Extension office (606-845-4641). Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.