

Ban On Methyl Bromide Delayed

Recently Congress and the Clinton Administration changed the U. S. Clean Air Act to allow continued use of methyl bromide until the year 2005.

This extension is quite a rare accomplishment, but due to the communication efforts of many turf and agriculture professionals, industry, and numerous trade organizations, Congress understood the importance of methyl bromide as a soil fumigant to all of American agriculture.

The 2005 date was set by a treaty known as the Montreal Protocol for all developed nations. The United States law had previously required a phase-out by the year 2001.

The extension however is accompanied by a 25 percent reduction in methyl bromide production beginning in Jan. 1 and followed by an additional 25 percent cut Jan. 1, 2001 and another 20 percent

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decrease Jan. 1, 2003.

What this means is that the supply of methyl bromide is and will become increasingly tight as the next reduction phase kicks in. Prices will continue to rise, particularly in the lower-volume uses, such as quarantine, commodity and structural fumigation.

Ironically, the continuing development of improved turfgrass varieties is making the concept of "strip, till, fumi-

gate and grass" more feasible than ever. This concept, however, will not last much beyond 2005 without complications unless comparable alternatives are found.

The United States Department of Agriculture has the responsibility of trying to develop alternatives to methyl bromide fumigation for agricultural use and has spent millions of dollars in the effort. The only current study under way is being funded in part by the GCSAA with research being conducted jointly by the University of Florida at the Milton IFAS station, Georgia Foundation Seed and Hendrix and Dail, Inc.

The United States EPA is currently in the process of determining critical uses of methyl bromide and will seek input from various user groups. We will need your help again, as it will be very important that the EPA hear from you. The Methyl Bromide Working Group will let you know how and when you can help.

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