Sandoz surveys pesticide applicators

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...course superintendents have at least an equal concern to those of the agricultural and lawn care communities," said Jeff Cook, Sandoz's business manager for Barricade. "Maybe more than anything, I would have expected the golf course industry to respond in a more cavalier way — and the reason I say that is, we know the superintendents are under a lot of pressure to do a better job with less money. But there is clearly a high level of professional concern."

Question: What is the most common complaint you hear from the public, your neighbors or customers relating to the use of pesticide products?

Fifty-three percent of the superintendents surveyed said they didn't receive any complaints, while 15 percent cited problems pertaining to odor. Nine percent of the golf course managers reported fielding complaints about worker safety, and 5 percent heard complaints regarding environmental safety.

More than 50 percent of all surveyed groups indicated they are dealing with more public concern over pest control and the environment, compared to five years ago. Farmers were the highest, at 80 percent.

Yet about half of the respondents in all groups said their personal level of concern associated with pest control has also increased over the past five years. According to Cook, these are disturbing trends the chemical industry cannot afford to ignore.

"Honestly, I think some people in the industry — competitors included — get nervous about surveys like these," said Cook. "Why? I'm not sure. In the agricultural community, it's more exposed. Every time an issue is raised, it's discussed publicly."

"In the golf course business, it seems to hit closer to home. Manufacturers don't want to be quite as open about the issues at hand. We thought long and hard about doing the study [and including superintendents], but we thought it was the right thing to do."

"These issues are not going to go away."

According to Max Larsen, executive vice president for Gallup in Lincoln, Neb., "Respondents said that manufacturers and the government have primary responsibility to educate the public and fix safety and environmental problems."

"But they see themselves as partners in the process."

Question: Do people in your industry always, sometimes, not usually or never follow labels closely?

A full 93 percent of superintendents polled answered "always," the highest figure for any of the seven groups. Farmers were lowest at 68 percent.

Cook said it cost Sandoz approximately $100,000 to conduct the poll. A minimum of 100 superintendents were among the 2,650 pesticide applicators contacted — via the telephone — by the Gallup Organization. For more information on the survey and information about obtaining a copy, call Sandoz at 708-699-1616.

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