Dow AgroSciences snaps up Rohm and Haas’ agrochemicals business

By ANDREW OVERBECK

INDIANAPOLIS — With Dow AgroSciences absorbing Rohm and Haas’ Agricultural Chemicals business for $1 billion, the consolidation cycle in the agrochemicals industry has claimed another victim.

“Everyone is trying to get their businesses bigger,” said John Roberts, an analyst with Merrill Lynch in New York City. “It is a business that is research and development intensive and deals like this spread the costs over a much larger sales base. It is an economy of scale and productivity-driven consolidation.”

GETTING BIGGER

The acquisition of Rohm and Haas’ agrochemicals division, which had sales of $3.3 billion in 2000, will boost Dow AgroScience’s annual sales to $3 billion, making it the world’s largest agrochemical concern. Rohm and Haas was the 15th largest firm.

Under terms of the agreement, Dow AgroSciences will acquire Rohm and Haas’ fungicide, insecticide and herbicide lines, trademarks, and licenses to all agricultural uses of its biotechnology assets. Turf and ornamental products included in the deal are Dimension, Eagle, Foral and Dihane fungicides and Goul and Kerb herbicides. The transaction is expected to close in the second quarter of 2001.

“These product lines complement our portfolio by adding high performance, brand name products for specialty crops as well as turf and ornamental businesses around the world,” said A. Charles Fischer, president and CEO of Dow AgroSciences.

ROHM AND HAAS PULLS OUT

The transaction also marks the end of Rohm and Haas’ 70-year run in the agrochemicals business.

“This is a strategic decision,” said George Bochanski, a spokesman for Rohm and Haas. “Over the last 20 years, agrochemicals has been a growing business, but as a percentage of total sales its numbers have been slipping. On top of that we have made significant investments in other areas of chemistry, primarily electronic materials and polymers.”

“We realized that we would have to make a significant investment in agrochemicals,” he added. “That was an investment that we were not prepared to make.”

NEW CHEMISTRY

Syngenta rolls out Touchdown Pro, takes on Roundup

By ANDREW OVERBECK

GREENSBORO, N.C. — Syngenta has rolled out a patented new formulation of glyphosate that is aimed squarely at Monsanto’s Roundup herbicide. The company claims that the non-selective, foliar systemic herbicide utilizes a diammonium salt of glyphosate that allows for faster and more complete penetration and absorption of the herbicide. Due to previous patent restrictions, this is the first year that Syngenta has been able to sell Touchdown Pro in non-agricultural markets.

“The adjuvants in the formulation allow for the increased effectiveness,” said David Ross, Ph.D. “The adjuvants don’t cause injury to the plant, allowing cells on the plant surface to fully uptake the herbicide and translocate it more effectively.”

Parkway introduces Neo-Tec bio-nematicide

By ANDREW OVERBECK

HOUSTON — Parkway Research has introduced a bio-pesticide that provides preventive control of nematodes. Neo-Tec’s active ingredient, plant extract 620, is a combination of oak, sumac, mango and cactus extracts. It acts as a barrier between turf roots and nematode activity.

“When a plant grows it releases extracts through its roots that generate bacterial activity but also act as a signaling device for nematodes,” said Neo-Tec marketing manager Derek Little. “We put these extracts together with fatty acids and as they spread out across the soil profile it blocks the nematode, making it harder for them to find the root of the plant that you are trying to protect.”

APPLICATION AND TIMING

According to Little, Neo-Tec works best as a preventive control.

“If you have an existing problem with nematodes, you will continue to have a problem,” he said. “Our product is not curative, so you will need to do a knock down to reduce the population before setting up a barrier with Neo-Tec. If used in concert with Roundup or Touchdown Pro, it can be used as a barrier with Neo-Tec.

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BASF enters strobilurin fray with Insignia

By ANDREW OVERBECK

RALEIGH, N.C. — BASF has entered the strobilurin fungicide market with the introduction of Insignia. When the broad-spectrum fungicide comes to market in 2002, it will compete directly with both Bayer’s Compass and Syngenta’s Heri

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Touchdown Pro to rival Roundup
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[traditional] glyphosate you see an effect in 10 to 14 days. With our formulation you will see effects a couple of days sooner and the consistency of control will be improved.”

The corn-based surfactants assist in wetting the leaf surface and neutralizing positively charged calcium and magnesium ions that can tie up glyphosate, rendering it unavailable for uptake into the plant. The formulation also enhances the translocation of the herbicide through the weed’s vascular tissue to the shoots, roots and rhizomes. Diammonium salt also has no odor.

USE ON THE COURSE
Just like Roundup, Touchdown Pro is most likely to be used in spot backpack applications for control of weeds and as a method of killing off areas of old turf. “The product is perfect for renovation of fairways,” said Ross. “Since it has no residual activity you could come in and seed a fairway seven days after an application.”

The product can also be used in the wintertime to control weeds on Bermudagrass or zoysia grass fairways. “You can use the product any time the plant is growing,” he said. “But we have a stronger application rate that will work for getting perennial weed control during the winter.”

Cost and application rates per acre will be similar to Roundup, said Ross. The product is currently registered in most states and full registration is expected this spring.

BASF’s Insignia
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It will have improved control on pythium blight, gray leaf and dollar spot.”

— Jeff Barnes

Recent discoveries in soil surfactant chemistry have allowed Aqua-Aid to develop Aquifer, a new choice in soil surfactants. Aquifer produces and maintains an omni directional flow of applied irrigation and/or natural rain water. Aquifer’s exceptionally unique characteristic of producing downward and lateral movement of water (omni directional) provides a uniform moisture profile throughout the soil structure for up to 45 days.

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spot, summer patch and snow mold.

In addition, Insignia will have significantly more activity on certain diseases, said Barnes. “It will have improved control on pythium blight, gray leaf and dollar spot and it can be used at extended intervals,” he said. “It can also be used curatively once disease has already appeared and has a higher level of general activity on some of these fungi compared to other products.”

Insignia also offers longer periods of control and provides control at rates two to 10 times less than those for conventional fungicides.

PREVENTING RESISTANCE
Insignia will be used primarily as a preventive application.

EPA AND RESEARCH
The product is currently in the registration process with the Environmental Protection Agency and is expected to clear regulatory hurdles by the end of this year.

In the meantime, BASF continues to conduct university research across the country. “We have tested it in around 40 states,” said Barnes. “It will be useful on most every golf course across the range of cool and warm season grasses and will offer season-long control of turfgrass diseases from brown patch to pythium blight to snow mold.”