Tour Illuminates Chemical Business

BY PAT JONES

German tour guide, who spoke pretty good English, still described it as "looking for a needle in a hay heap."

- The next time someone questions the safety of the pesticides you use, remember these figures I heard during the tour: Before a chemical is registered by EPA, it's been through at least 10,000 individual tests over 10 years at an average cost of $150 million. Concerned golfers or soccer moms should rest assured that this is no fly-by-night process.

- Meridian, the new insecticide product Syngenta has been trying to bring to market for some time, is still being held up in the United States and Europe for "Risk Cup" reasons. The Risk Cup is the new, ridiculously complex standard for pesticide registration set up under FQPA. The company is optimistic but it's still unable to say for sure when Meridian will be available in the United States. Curiously, the only country to approve Meridian for turf is Japan, which has historically been very slow to register anything.

- On the nonbusiness side of the trip, I was a bit shocked at how many Europeans view President Bush as a warmonger. One Irish journalist was in my face for an hour about how Bush is leading the world into nuclear Armageddon.

- If you go to Zurich, you sure as heck better like veal. These people must have starved during the Mad Cow disease scare.

All in all, it was an excellent and educational adventure. I’m hopeful that other companies will see the value of these tours, particularly if their factory is in, say, the Virgin Islands.

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