MH Pesticides Suspended

In September the Environmental Protection Agency took action to suspend the registrations of pesticide products containing either the diethanolamine salt or the potassium salt of maleic hydrazide (MH). While MH is principally used to prevent tobacco suckering or harvest sprouting of onions and potatoes, it is also registered for use as a plant growth regulator on turfgrasses, ornamental hedges, and trees. It is especially useful in areas that are difficult to maintain such as along rights-of-ways, highways, industrial areas, airport properties and golf course roughs. We now have only those products which are now in the distribution chain.

When an RPAR review of MH, initiated in October 1977, indicated that additional chronic toxicological data was necessary to estimate the extent of risk caused by its use, EPA asked the registrants to supply such information. The Agency received no commitments for the studies required for the diethanolamine formulations and only one for the potassium salt for control of tobacco suckering. Accordingly, EPA has no other option than suspending the MH registrations. Under the suspension action, which became effective 30 days after the receipt of the EPA notice, registrants could only package, label, and release for shipment maleic hydrazide products produced before the effective date of the suspension.

Closed Systems for Pesticides Questioned

Ever since the California Department of Food and Agriculture required that commercial agricultural applicators use closed liquid systems for transfer of chemicals displaying the signal word DANGER on the label from containers to spray apparatus, there has been concern about the need for such a system. The controversy heated up further when EPA considered the use of closed system transfer as a requirement for the continuation of the registration of the emulsifiable concentrate of diallate, a pre-emergent herbicide.

Hand pouring has long been suspected as being the most hazardous activity involving the handling of highly toxic pesticides and the closed system transfer has been found by researchers in California to reduce this risk significantly. Diallate field studies by the producer, Monsanto Chemical Co., indicated an exposure reduction of 89% when closed system and protective clothing was compared to open system and protective clothing. However, the company also found that a similar reduction could be obtained by using rubber gloves and goggles and following label instructions explicitly. This information was presented at a Workshop on Closed System for Diallate in September, 1981 in Fargo, ND as were many of the disadvantages of the closed system. These included: lack of uniformity of containers and openings, large number of transfer systems but little standardization of pumps, pipes, motors, etc., the cost of the system, the time needed to activate a complex, closed system, and maintenance costs of the system. The Workshop conclusion was that closed systems have great promise but there must be considerable more experimentation before finding ones acceptable to the users, chemical and container manufacturers and the EPA.

Turfgrass Variety Protection

In December 1970, the U.S. Plant Variety Protection Act was enacted to encourage the development of novel varieties of seed-reproduced plants ranging from farm crops to flowers and to make them available to the public, providing protection of those who breed, develop, or discover them.

In the first nine months of 1981, certificates were issued to the Kentucky bluegrass varieties America, Apart and Eclipse; the hard fescue, Silvana; the tall fescue, Rebel; the perennial rye, Barvy; the red clover, Tristan; and the creeping foxtail, Retain.