



Bill Would Put Burden of Proof on EPA

Rep. Allen Boyd wants to require a scientific basis to justify any pesticide bans

Just after a slew of environmental groups chastised the EPA for going easy on farmers and pesticide manufacturers, U.S. Rep. Allen Boyd, D-Monticello, began pushing a bill that would force the environmental agency to use "sound science" to justify any pesticide bans.

"There are some situations where the EPA, to meet deadlines, is making assumptions that don't have a basis in science," Boyd said. "This clarifies the process."

The bill would amend the 1996 Food Quality Protection Act, which requires the Environmental Protection Agency to set limits on the amount of pesticide residue in food. Under the act, the EPA must begin assessing pesticide residues by August and may ban or limit the use of some pest-control chemicals.

Pesticide bans and limits could hurt Florida farmers, particularly tomato growers, if no other pest-control methods are available or effective, Boyd said. Without the pesticides, Florida farmers would be unable to compete with produce imports from Mexico, where environmental controls are lax.

"The agency doesn't believe that the FQPA needs amendments at this time," EPA spokeswoman Ellen Kramer said Wednesday. "We believe we are making

our decisions based on sound science."

Kramer stressed that EPA has not had a chance to review the legislation and declined further comment.

With the introduction of Boyd's bill, the EPA came under attack from both sides. On Tuesday, environmentalists and consumer advocates serving on the federal government's food quality advisory committee quit after accusing the EPA of delaying action and kowtowing to agribusiness and chemical companies.

In a letter to the executive director of the National Campaign for Pesticide Policy Reform, EPA acting deputy administrator Peter D. Robertson defended the agency.

"Making sure that EPA's risk-reduction actions are based on sound science is the most important step we can all take to guarantee that the FQPA's promise of protection for our children and the American public is actually fulfilled," Robertson wrote. "We, too, wish that this process could be faster."

The new bill would not change the standards set out in the Food Quality Protection Act, Boyd said. But it would force EPA to prove cause and effect. If the bill passes, the EPA would not be allowed to ban or limit the use of a pesticide if it made any non-scientific "assumptions" in concluding that the chemical leaves toxic residue in food.

The bill would prohibit the EPA from basing a pesticide ban on computations or modeling results that use "worst-case" sce-

narios or on any information about an alleged adverse effect if it is "anecdotal, unverified or scientifically implausible."

The legislation also would delay any bans if alternative pest control methods are unavailable, and would allow farmers to use the pesticide during emergency outbreaks of pests.

CREDIT: DONNA LEINWAND

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Florida Pesticide Review Council Meets in March

Doug Abbuhl, president of the Coastal Plains GCSEA attended the March 5 Pesticide Review Council meeting in Tallahassee to represent the FGCSA. The following excerpts are taken from the minutes of that meeting and may be of interest to our members.

Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS)

Dr. Marion Fuller, Director of Food Safety for FDACS reported on the recently released Consumer Union Report, "Do You Know What Food You're Eating?" While the report tried to identify foods with higher pesticide residues, the Toxicity Index is based on USDA residue data and factoring in subjective parameters. It is inappropriate to take a single serving and compare that to a chronic index or reference dose. The index had no peer review and most toxicologists frown on using this venue for proposing a methodology for risk assessment. The FQPA has had a profound effect on our product registration system. There are more emergency exemption registrations and a slowdown in new products coming in as the agency shifts to cover FQPA responsibilities.

Ground Water Issues

Dr. Dennis Howard, newly appointed chief of the Bureau of Pesticides, discussed a large field study that is in the resulting measuring stage. A number of the field studies were done to determine the potential for various products to leach under reasonable worst-case scenarios. A Florida-

FQPA Participation Critical

Allen James, executive director of Responsible Industry for a Safe Environment, says now is the time to keep up the pressure on Congress. Grassroots response has slowed down the process, but EPA has not been swayed from their course of faulty risk assessment.

Joel Jackson, FGCSA director of communications will prepare a letter to your representative and senators for your signature on your club's letterhead stationery. Just send three sheets of your club's letterhead stationery and a self-addressed stamped envelope to Joel Jackson, FQPA, 6780 Tamarind Circle, Orlando FL, 32819. The letters will be returned to you for your signature and mailing to your legislators to keep the pressure on EPA to use good science and common sense in enacting the law.