

Pesticides Under Fire

Unless end-users let their voices be heard, the choice of pest control products may get slimmer

BY ANGELA BENDORF

The Environmental Protection Agency is reviewing the uses of pesticides as required by the Food Quality Protection Act, and it is already removing some that are important to the green industry.

On Aug. 3, the U.S. House Agriculture Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry held a hearing on public health pesticides and the EPA's announcement that registrants will cancel uses of azinphos methyl and methyl parathion.

Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE)'s Allen James testified as part of a non-agriculture industry panel, along with other public health experts. James and his fellow panelists explained the problems with EPA's residential risk-assessment assumptions.

They also focused on the increased risk of disease likely to result if products for controlling public health pests are canceled as part of the tolerance reassessment process. They pointed out that two significant industry task forces are quickly compiling residential use data to overcome the inflated assumptions that EPA is using for residential exposure assessments.

The panel members all agreed EPA should not make decisions about the cancellation of non-agricultural products until the data are available.

During the hearing, subcommittee members blasted the EPA for implementing FQPA rules before developing sound science to warrant them. In addition to the EPA's exaggerated residential exposure assumptions, the members criticized EPA for placing restrictions on methyl parathion and azinphos methyl prior to finalizing several key science policies. Subcommittee chairman Bob Good-

latte (R-VA) said sound science is still lacking, and that administrator Charlotte Browner's cancellation of uses of these chemicals is "outrageous." Goodlatte and others accused the EPA of succumbing to extreme environmental groups.

Bills call for open, fair regulation

Two bills introduced by Congress call for a clear and predictable regulatory process based on scientific data for FQPA implementation.

The Regulatory Fairness and Openness Act of 1999 (H.R. 1592) was introduced in the House of Representatives last spring and has 165 co-sponsors.

The legislation would:

- Require EPA to conduct a "transition analysis" to determine scientific data gaps and require these gaps be filled before the agency makes final decisions that suspend or restrict a pesticide product.
- Prohibit EPA from revoking or modifying a tolerance during the 10-year reassessment period based on certain kinds of assumptions or inadequate information.
- Require EPA to issue for public comment regulatory procedures, policies and data guidelines that specify the information required to support a new or existing tolerance.
- Require EPA to consider the international and domestic impact on crop protection from FQPA-based decisions and require the Department of Agriculture to monitor the competitive impact on these decisions on U.S. commodity sectors.
- Allow EPA to issue Section 18 emergency exemptions without conducting full risk assessments in cases where incremental exposure to the pesticide would not pose significant risk.
- Establish a permanent FQPA Pesticide Advisory Committee, similar to the Tolerance Reassessment Advisory Committee.

The Senate introduced a companion FQPA bill, S.B. 1464, in July with 20 cosponsors almost identical to H.R. 1592.

As part of the six-phase process the EPA should follow to implement FQPA risk assessments, pesticide users have the opportunity to comment on their use and the benefits of the pesticide being assessed.

The preliminary risk assessment is put in the public docket and on the EPA Web site for a 60-day comment period. A schedule of the organophosphates being reviewed by the EPA this year can be found on the EPA Web site at www.epa.gov/pesticide/op. ■

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For more information on how to get involved in the FQPA debate, see Golfdom's "Act on FQPA" supplement in this issue.

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