

Vice-President Gore Issues Directive on FQPA

"...I am requesting that the EPA Administrator and the Secretary of Agriculture work together to ensure that implementation of the paramount public health goals of the new law is informed by a sound regulatory approach..."

In response to letters, calls and visits to the White House and Congress from those affected by the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA), Vice President Al Gore issued a directive to EPA and USDA on proper implementation of the law on April 8.

The four-page memorandum to USDA Secretary Dan Glickman and EPA Administrator Carol Browner outlines a series of "Implementation Principles." In summary, the principles require decisions based on science, communication and public in-

put. Many of the principles address specific problems the regulated industry has been experiencing in trying to work with the EPA.

Communicate, Disclose And Explain

The directive says decisions should be "transparent" to affected constituencies and that the agency communicate in a manner that facilitates informed review.

Discretion

The directive reminds the EPA that

it has discretion in applying elements of the law, such as the 10x safety factor and addressing risks to children.

Transition

EPA is told to allow for transition, respond appropriately to emergency pest management problems, and be open to using a variety of approaches for reducing risk. The agency will be held to its work that pesticide registration cancellations will not affect this growing season.

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Consultation

EPA and USDA are dedicated to establish a mechanism for getting advice and information from affected user groups, lawmakers, government agencies and the public.

We're not out of the woods yet. Tell lawmakers that the situation warrants their continued attention. GCSAA will also continue to work with RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment) and our industry allies to ensure representation of the golf course superintendents as specialty pesticide users in the implementation of FQPA.

STATEMENT OF RISE

We welcome the directive by the Clinton Administration on implementation of the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA). Announcement of the directive is an encouraging sign. It is extremely important to have an open, fair process to assure that sound science underpins the nation's pesticide policy. Science-based decisions are essential to protecting children; these decisions must be made using reliable information.

We also are encouraged about the Administration's call for broad stakeholder participation. We believe that broad and balanced participation is key to full and fair implementation of FQPA.

A number of the food protection pesticides affected by the Act also are ones on which the nation's specialty pesticide industry consumers depend for safe and effective pest control. We will continue to work to ensure that Americans have the products they need for home, garden and institutional pest control, as well as the crop protection tools necessary to maintain our healthy bountiful food and fiber supply.

Participation by USDA will help ensure that reliable information on pesticide use and exposure are made available to EPA in a timely manner. We will work with USDA and EPA to assure that needed data on our industry products are considered to help fulfill the mandate of FQPA, in the best interests of the specialty industry and consumers.

Problem

The new law substantially changes the way pesticides are evaluated scientifically for their health effects. With no transition time, EPA has the task of re-evaluating more than 9,000 pesticide uses for safety within 10 years, with the first 3,000, including most organophosphate and carbamate insecticides, subject to an August 1999 deadline. EPA is deciding which pesticides and pesticide uses (or tolerances) will remain available and which won't.

Arguing that it must meet the short deadlines imposed by FQPA to set pesticide tolerances, it appears EPA is using unrealistic, theoretical assumptions, rather than real-world data from farmers, businesses, public health officials and others about how they actually use pesticides to protect their crops and us.

If FQPA implementation continues in this manner, sooner or later, virtually all pesticides and pesticide uses will be jeopardized. From wormy apples in agriculture, to cockroaches in the kitchen and crabgrass choking the lawn. Americans in every walk of life will miss the benefits of effective pest control.

Economic and Environmental Impacts

Because EPA is not implementing FQPA fully and fairly, valuable pesticides will be unnecessarily lost, threatening farm production, business operations and public services. For example, able to choose from a wider array of pesticides, foreign growers will enjoy a competitive edge over U.S. farmers. Fewer pest control products will mean less conservation tillage, less Integrated Pest Management and more pest resistance.

Pest control products that keep our golf courses weed- and fungus-free and our rights-of-way safe will be lost.

Solution

FQPA's requirements are strict but achievable, provided EPA: allows development of the best scientific data to meet the new safety standards; bases pesticide decisions on actual pesticide use, and uses uniform policies to implement FQPA. By implementing what Congress intended in FQPA, consumer and environmental protection is maintained and enhanced.



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