

# GOVERNMENT UPDATE



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## Silvex disposal cost to top \$12 million

Almost three years ago (Feb. 79), EPA issued an emergency suspension of the forestry, rights-of-way and pasture uses of the herbicide 2,4,5-T and all the registered uses of silvex, another phenoxy herbicide. The emergency suspension called for immediate discontinuation of manufacture, sale and use of the chemicals.

EPA and Dow Chemical, the chief producer of 2,4,5-T, are discussing ways to resolve differences on that herbicide or to finally cancel or reregister the chemical.

On the other hand, Chevron Chemical Co., the chief producer of Silvex, agreed to halt production, recall and dispose of the herbicide, and permanently cancel all of the registrations. In return, Chevron would be allowed to claim payment for all of the existing stocks of silvex.

In July, the U.S. Court of Claims ordered the Federal government to pay Chevron \$12,880,842.98 for its stocks of silvex. The cost of the decision to suspend silvex will be nearly \$19 million, not counting the time spent by hundreds of people involved in the many phases of the cancellation action.

## USDA had back-up chemical for Medfly

If malathion had not been effective on the Mediterranean fruit fly (Medfly), the USDA had a back-up chemical.

On July 7, the Department had requested a Section 18 specific exemption for the use of acephate (Orthene) to eradicate the Medfly in California. This was just three days before the Governor of California agreed to the aerial use of malathion and one week before the spraying began. EPA did not publish this request in the Federal Register until August 24. When the comment period closed on September 8, USDA has already withdrawn the request. By that time the Federal authorities considered the prospects favorable for the successful eradication of the Medfly infestation.

As a result of experiments run to determine the efficacy of the organophosphate insecticide, acephate on the Medfly, the USDA was aware that this chemical had two decided advantages over malathion. Acephate provided a better residual of effective bait and did not damage car finishes. However, the acute oral LD<sub>50</sub> (rat) of 945 mg/kg for acephate compared to 1375 mg/kg for malathion. Acephate, Orthene®, is known more for its control of insect pests on ornamentals than for its agricultural uses. There are only 6 tolerances for the residue of acephate on raw agricultural commodities and a few more for meat, eggs, and milk products. When I last counted the malathion residue tolerances 3 years ago, there were 146 of them. I'm sure that the officials involved in Medfly programs decisions did not look forward to selling the safety of aerial spraying of acephate when the efficacy and safety data was not as well-documented as that of malathion.

## 1978 census puts \$3.5 billion tag on nursery

The U.S. Census Bureau periodically surveys the agricultural sales in the country. In 1980, a very comprehensive survey was made as a part of the decennial census mandated by the Congress. The results of this survey are still unavailable, however, some figures from 1978 indicate that the nursery and greenhouse products business is a potent force in the market place—about \$3.5 billion divided as follows: foliage and flowering plants, \$815.0 million; other nursery and greenhouse products, \$793.0 million; cut flowers and florist greens, \$352.5 million; bedding plants, \$289.0 million; sod, \$174.2 million; and bulbs, \$31.3 million. There were more than 33 thousand farms with 1/2 million square feet under glass or other protection and more than 1/3 of a million acres in production. We can be proud of our green industry.

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