

FQPA represents huge industry challenge

PALM BEACH, FL— Bringing about change to the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA) will not be easy. The Director of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Office of Pesticide Programs Marcia Mulkey said as much at the Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment's (RISE's) eighth annual meeting in September.

On the other hand, lobbyist David Crow brought the specialty pesticide industries a ray of hope when he spoke at the same meeting. "I would ask the EPA to go slower, take its time, issue limited tolerances and give us (the industry) the opportunity to develop the science," he said.

Crow said that earlier this

year, the EPA was moving to eliminate an entire class of chemistry, the organophosphates, when the users of these products appealed to their legislators.

"This may have saved a huge number of our products, simply because of the political pressure applied," he said. "Congressional members got a huge number of letters, calls and visits."

An average member of Congress gets 20,000 to 25,000 letters a month, Crow said, and if they don't hear from their people, nothing happens when a lobbyist walks into their offices.

"If we don't continue our direct involvement in this process, we are not going to

have any of the products we want to keep around," he added. "You have to step up the pace in 1999 and 2000 if you want to keep your products. Congress must continue to understand how much is at stake for us."

During her speech, Mulkey said, "I have no doubt that the fundamental principles articulated in the statute are virtually impossible to argue with. It makes good sense to say that, when you are looking at the effects of a pesticide on a person or on the environment, you have to look at all of the sources of exposure together. This refers to the statute's aggregate risk provision."

Mulkey added that if a group of pesticides operate in the same way toward a person or the environment, then the EPA must look at the cumulative exposure of all of the sources together.

"Finally, the notion that we will go the extra mile for children, makes sense," she continued. "We all expect an extra margin of safety when it comes to children."

However, during the question-and-answer period, Mulkey did admit that the extra

mile for children theme "may also be good politics."

Mulkey concluded that all of the FQPA's fundamental principles are not debatable, and are not much debated. "The tricky part is figuring out how to implement them in way that make sense.

"The truth is that FQPA has changed the way we think about pesticides for everyone," she said. "All sources of exposure are now thought about in the same way and in the same risk assessment. FQPA created a premium on risk mitigation. It is easy to abandon a use for a product. It is much more difficult to keep uses while dramatically altering exposure."

Mulkey said she suspects that because the FQPA begins with the word "food" and focuses on food, non-food users such as pest control and lawn care may think that they will get short shrift. They may think they will be sacrificed in the process, or may be overwhelmed by the focus on dietary risk.

"I can tell you that I hear the exact same fears from the agricultural side," she said. "They say that food uses may be blamed for all of the risk, for example."

by Jerry Mix

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