

# Green Industry can bring balanced view

*RISE is striving to keep the EPA fully informed. Green Industry professionals can help by telling representatives why pesticides are necessary for the public's protection.*

By LISA SHAHEEN

**A**s questions fly around the Environmental Protection

Agency (EPA) about weighing the risks associated with pesticide use, Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE) is working diligently to keep the answers in balanced perspective. The message from RISE: pesticides are not the problem—pests are.

Elizabeth Lawder, program manager for Washington, D.C.-based RISE, has closely followed the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA) since the law has become an issue for the Green Industry. The FQPA has

the potential to eliminate pesticides, beginning with the organophosphates and carbamates, as soon as August 1999. Lawder is responsible for all communication activities for the organization, and her primary focus is on specialty pesticides. She suggests that lawn care operators (LCOs) shift the focus from the idea that pesticides are the problem, and put more emphasis on pests as the problem.

When the FQPA was first passed, RISE representatives were very supportive of its intentions. The industry has been trying to reform the Delaney Clause for years, and the FQPA eliminated that problem. The Delaney Clause was an amendment to the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) that called for zero tolerance of any cancer-causing food additive. When the clause was adopted it was reasonable, but as technology improved, detection methods became so tightly honed that it became impossible to adhere to the provisions of the Delaney Clause.

"When we first heard that this bill was going to move, we were pleased, because it does



reform the Delaney Clause," Lawder reports.

The problems began as the EPA began planning implementation of the FQPA.

"We support the goals of the FQPA, but what we're seeing now is that the EPA is using default assumptions in implementation, based on unrealistic assumptions," she says.

RISE wants to cooperate as much as possible with the EPA and assist the agency in obtaining information necessary for proper implementation of the FQPA. However, RISE has faced some resistance.

"We're trying to tell the EPA that the industry is willing to provide the data that you need, but give us guidance on what you're looking for so that we can provide it," she indicates.

It sounds cut and dry, but so

far, it hasn't been that easy. The EPA hasn't requested any data.

"Some high-ranking officials at the EPA say that they have all the data that they need in order to make the decisions that they need to make," she admonishes. "Our argument is that they are using theoretical models and not real-world data."

Lawder wants the EPA to have a balanced viewpoint as it reviews pesticide risks, and points out the important, although often overlooked, fact that pests endanger public health, damage structures and cause disease. Pesticides, on the other hand, are one of the tools and part of the solution to pest problems.

Lawder's main message to PCOs is that these relevant tools could be lost.



"We don't want to wait until it's too late to draw attention to the importance of specialty pesticides," Lawder asserts.

RISE wants to educate the EPA and the public on not only the value, the safety and how important pesticides are to lawn care businesses, but also how important they are to managing damaging pests.

Of course, everybody wants a safe food supply, legislators included, and public health is something that consumers can really latch onto. These are the areas that the EPA needs to be reminded about.

"What we're trying to do is let people know that pesticides are a really important part of managing public health pests,"

she stresses.

#### LCO role

From experience, LCOs understand why pesticides are a necessity when it comes to lawn care. However, it's not always as clear to legislators and the public. Lawder says it's vital that LCOs know the importance of their individual comments to their representatives.

"The more letters a Congressperson gets from a constituent, the better. It's very important that members of Congress hear from the people back home because they do listen," she states.

Lawder says that every Congressional office tracks letters received, so they know what is coming in and where it

is coming from. This brings attention to a specific problem and encourages the representative to make it a priority.

"The more people who write, the higher up on the priority list the issue goes," she adds.

Lawder offers recommendations when communicating with legislators. She says LCOs should be specific and get personal. Lawn care operators should tell their representatives about their business, noting items such as number of employees and years in business. An LCO can establish an air of professionalism by describing what kind of professional training they have and stating that their technicians are trained.

"Explain exactly what you

do. For example, an LCO might say, 'I control harmful turf insects, and I service 3,000 homeowners in your district,'" Lawder suggests.

Since organophosphates are at the top of the EPA's list, identify the specific organophosphate products that are used in lawn care or on golf courses. Tell the representative how important it is to have a particular product as a tool, not only to conduct business, but also to control pests.

Finally, drive home the fact that pest control protects the public.

*Lisa Shaheen is senior managing editor of Pest Control magazine.*

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