

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

European Commission pages on pesticides

- General information on active substances and on plant protection products
http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/protection/evaluation/index_en.htm
- New Regulation on Plant protection products
http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/protection/evaluation/new_regulation_en.htm
- Strategy on the sustainable use of pesticides
<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ppps/home.htm>
- General information on pesticide residues
http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/protection/pesticides/index_en.htm
- European Food Safety Authority
<http://www.efsa.europa.eu>



ND-80-09-526-EN-N



FACTSHEET

EU ACTION ON PESTICIDES “our food has become greener”

March 2009



DATABASE OF APPROVED PESTICIDES

- To find out which active substances are approved in Europe a database can be consulted on the website of the European Commission. For each substance there is a reference to the EU legislation, including the relevant toxicological information and the maximum residue levels in food and feed. The database also allows searching for substances according to defined criteria and exporting the desired information to Excel.

http://ec.europa.eu/sanco_pesticides/public/index.cfm

The Commission has completed the review of existing pesticides that were on the market before 1993. This programme concerned about 1 000 substances and led to removal from the market of more than two thirds of these substances. All reviewed pesticides have undergone a detailed risk evaluation with respect to their effects on humans and on the environment.

WHAT ARE PESTICIDES AND WHY ARE THEY USED?

- The yield of agricultural and horticultural crops can be **severely reduced as a result of infestation by pests and diseases**. In order to protect crops before and after harvest, plant protection products are used.
- In the European Union, no plant protection product can be used unless it has first been scientifically established that:
 - (1) they have no **harmful effects** on consumers, farmers and local residents and passers-by;
 - (2) they do not cause unacceptable effects on the **environment**;
 - (3) they are sufficiently **effective against pests**.
- In some cases these products act by confusing insects or making crops less palatable for pests. But more commonly, the harmful insects, weeds and fungi are killed by these chemicals. **Such pesticides could have severe undesirable effects** if they are not strictly regulated.

- Plant protection products, or pesticides (insecticides, fungicides, herbicides), are chemical formulations containing an active substance and other ingredients. They are important for the protection of plants and crops in agriculture, horticulture, forestry and gardening.
- Active substances are the essential component of plant protection products. They protect the plant against insects, fungi and weeds.
- Active substances are approved at EU-level, while plant protection products containing these substances are authorised at Member State level.



WHY A REVIEW PROGRAMME OF EXISTING PESTICIDES?

- As laid down in Directive 91/414/EEC, in 1993 the European Commission launched the work programme on the Community-wide review for all active substances used in plant protection products within the European Union. In this review process, each substance had to be evaluated as to whether it could be used safely with respect to human health (consumers, farmers, local residents and passers-by) and the environment, in particular groundwater and non-target organisms, such as birds, mammals, earthworms, bees.
- There were about 1 000 active substances (and tens of thousands of products containing them) on the market at the time the Directive was adopted. Decisions only really started to be taken in 2001 as harmonised technical requirements had to be set first.
- The programme started slowly, but the work accelerated as of 2005. This enabled the review programme to be finalised in March 2009 when the last decisions were taken. In short, 75% of the decisions were taken in the last four years. This achievement has been possible due to the efforts of the Commission and the European Food Safety Authority, as well as the strong commitment of Member State experts.
- This review provides assurances that the substances currently on the market are acceptable for human health and for the environment, in accordance with European-wide criteria. Until this review was finalised, the level of protection could vary widely and national rules on substances could continue to apply.

THE EU SYSTEM FOR APPROVAL OF PESTICIDES

- The evaluation, marketing and use of pesticides (herbicides, insecticides, fungicides etc.) in plant protection in the Community are regulated under Council Directive 91/414/EEC. This Directive lays out a comprehensive risk assessment and authorisation procedure for active substances and products containing these substances. Each active substance has to be proven safe in terms of human health, including residues in the food chain, animal health and the environment, in order to be allowed to be marketed. It is the responsibility of industry to provide the data showing that a substance can be used safely with respect to human health and the environment.
- The first step of the evaluation process involves a Rapporteur Member State, which transmits its preliminary conclusions on the substance to the European Food Safety Authority. A scientific risk assessment involving the European Food Safety Authority is then carried out, followed by risk management steps carried out by the Commission with the assistance of the Member States within the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health.
- If the evaluation shows that the substance has no harmful effect on human or animal health and that it has no unacceptable influence on the environment, the substance can be approved.
- An EU list of approved active substances is established, and Member States may authorise only plant protection products containing active substances included in this list.



Thanks to the combined efforts by the Member States, the European Food Safety Authority and the Commission, the review programme is now complete. The driving force behind this programme has always been to ensure the protection of human health and the environment. As a result, I can now confidently say that our food has become greener!

Paola Testori Coggi, Deputy Director General, DG Health&Consumers



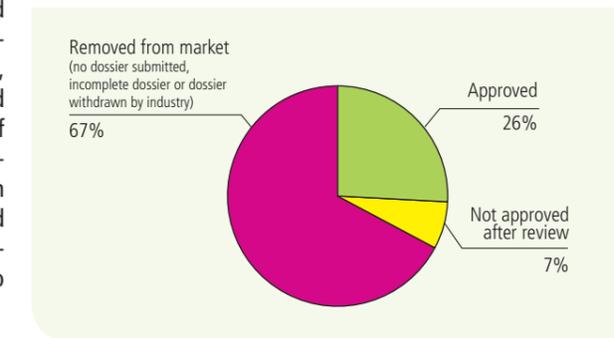
The seeds sown some 10 years ago are now bearing their fruit. Our aim has constantly been to ensure improved protection of human health and the environment, to the benefit of all citizens and future generations. We will not rest on our laurels as we strive to further reduce the impact of pesticides on health and the environment and continue our work towards sustainable development.

Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health

RESULTS OF THE REVIEW PROGRAMME

- The review of existing pesticides has led to the removal from the market of pesticides which cannot be used safely. Of some 1 000 active substances on the market in at least one Member State before 1993, 26 %, corresponding to about 250 substances, have passed the harmonised EU safety assessment. The majority of substances (67%) have been eliminated because dossiers were either not submitted, incomplete or withdrawn by industry. About 70 substances failed the review and have been removed from the market, because the evaluation carried out did not show safe use with respect to human health and the environment.

Review programme of existing pesticides: overview



WHAT IS THE EU DOING TO REDUCE THE USE OF PESTICIDES?

- The EU seeks to **reduce the overall impact of pesticides on health and the environment** and indeed their actual usage. In 2006, the European Commission proposed a strategy to improve the way pesticides are used across the EU.
- The strategy aims to **encourage low-input or pesticide-free cultivation**, in particular through raising user awareness, promoting the use of codes of good practice and making financial means available for applied research and training.
- A new legislative framework on pesticides based on the Commission proposal has recently been adopted by the European Parliament and the Council:

approval of substances, to ensure a high level of protection for human and animal health and the environment. In particular this Regulation provides that carcinogens, mutagens, endocrine disruptors, substances toxic for reproduction or which are very persistent will not be approved, unless exposure to humans is negligible. It also establishes a mechanism for the **substitution of more toxic pesticides** by safer (including non-chemical) alternatives.

- (1) A Regulation on placing on the market of plant protection products, specifying **strict criteria for**

(2) A **Directive on the sustainable use of plant protection products**, which aims at reducing the risk linked to the use of pesticides, improving the quality and efficacy of pesticide application equipment, ensuring better training and education of users and developing integrated pest management schemes.

