

## CROP PROTECTION ASSOCIATION<sup>1</sup> (CPA) PARTNERSHIP PROPOSALS

Faced with the threat of pesticide taxation the CPA at Government invitation has developed a package of proposals to address the potential environmental impacts of the use of crop protection products in agriculture

### Introduction

Since 1997, the Government has been considering the imposition of a tax on pesticides. After a consultation process following the publication of the ECOTEC study Stephen Timms MP, the Financial Secretary, met with the Crop Protection Association, as representatives of the crop protection industry. At this meeting he made it clear that the Government was prepared to consider a viable package of voluntary measures in place of the tax. On this basis he expected the farming industry to adopt a “partnership approach” and invited the crop protection industry to develop a package of proposals, which would address the potential environmental impacts of the use of crop protection products in agriculture.

### Summary of proposals

The following is a summary of the CPA proposals for which it is inviting comment from government and other interested parties as a new partnership approach to minimising the environmental impacts of crop protection chemicals. They seek to address the continued concern of government and the public over the potential influence of pesticides in 3 areas – the environment, biodiversity and water quality.

- Conducting a comprehensive survey of current practices and equipment used when applying agricultural pesticides to identify potential areas for improvement.
- Appointment of a Biodiversity Officer for the crop protection industry.
- Providing additional support for the Environment Agency (EA) research on pesticide handling and sprayer wash-down areas.
- Increasing the commitment to the UK Foresight Programme to identify further potential environmental areas for action.
- Funding a research project to measure the adoption of Integrated Crop Management and to encourage further uptake.
- Increasing industry support for the SAPPIO LINK programme.
- Providing environmental information for each crop protection product.

<sup>1</sup> The Crop Protection Association is the new name for the former British Agrochemicals Association (BAA), based at Peterborough, UK. The name change reflects the increased involvement of the association in non-chemical methods of crop protection, including biologically-based and other leading-edge biotechnologies.

- Providing specific information on nozzle selection and performance to facilitate decision making and reduce potential spray drift.
- Conducting a review of the information currently appearing on the labels of crop protection products and identifying improvements to ensure clarity for the user.
- Supporting the increased use of the University of Hertfordshire’s Environmental Management for Agriculture (EMA) software and contributing to the development of further modules.
- Improving crop protection application practice on farms through additional training of users and “best practice” publicity campaigns.
- Collaborating with water companies, the National Farmers Union (England and Wales), the National Farmers Union for Scotland, the Ulster Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association to improve farmer awareness and operator behaviour in specific ‘catchments’ and other “high risk” situations.
- Conducting a review of environmental, biodiversity, integrated crop management and conservation information needs and producing a comprehensive information resource for all advisory staff in Crop Protection Association member companies.
- Development of basic guidance training resources specifically for the infrequent crop protection chemical user.
- Improving sprayer operator training and certification.
- Promoting the wider adoption of an independent generic sprayer test to encourage good maintenance of spray equipment and thus more accurate application.
- Introducing a new “code of practice” for the contract application of sulfuric acid.
- Ensuring that all agronomist advisory staff working for Crop Protection Association member companies have good awareness of environmental issues and are members of the BASIS Professional Register.
- Auditing compliance with the training requirements set by the Crop Protection Association.
- Examining ways of promoting awareness and compliance with the new Local Environmental Risk Assessment for Pesticides (LERAP) requirements to protect surface water.

The CPA are seeking the following support from Government to strengthen the effectiveness of the package:

- Conducting a review of the current mandatory operator training and certification procedures to ensure good value and effective training.

## INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

- Undertaking a review to improve the clarity of label information on correct usage.
- Providing guidance to the industry on ways of accessing existing Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) support for operator and agronomy advisor training.
- Encouraging the enforcement authorities to consider providing appropriate pragmatic signals that would accelerate the adoption of new technologies and improved practices on farms and horticultural holdings.
- Committing Pesticides Safety Directorate assistance in the development and auditing of environmental impact information for all pesticide products.
- Requiring that all agronomist advisers should be BASIS qualified.
- Encouraging all appropriate enforcing authorities to consider the organisation of high profile regional campaigns to improve pesticide application practices.
- Improving the co-ordination, effectiveness and activity amongst its advisory and enforcing bodies/Agencies that have an interest in matters relating to pesticide use.
- Examining the flow of health and safety information to farmers and sprayer operators.

A key element of this innovative package is the formation of a steering group, the Pesticide Stewardship Task Force. This body will be composed of representatives from the crop protection industry together with independent members. Their role will be to coordinate and ensure implementation of all the activities identified in the proposals.

The complete package of proposals can be downloaded from the CPA website at <http://www.baa.org.uk/>, or can be obtained in printed form by contacting The Crop Protection Association office at 4 Lincoln Road, Peterborough PE1 2RP, UK (Tel, 01733 349225)

## GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN THE 21st CENTURY – problems, causes and solutions

Jason Weeks from CEH-Monks Wood, UK, reports

The Third SETAC (Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry) World Congress (Tenth Annual Meeting of SETAC Europe), held in Brighton, UK, from 21–25 May 2000, was attended by over 1300 attendees from all over the world, spanning academics, government representatives and industrialists. SETAC meetings are well known for their informality and the creation of an atmosphere conducive to the free exchange of information and ideas and this was no exception, in addition to the structured programme there were many breakout sessions, *ad hoc* meetings and spontaneous gatherings throughout the week.

The programme organisers designed the meeting on the theme of environmental issues in a global context, and recognised that whilst problems are often and best solved at a local scale, many of the underlying issues are of a global nature. Sir Crispen Tickell set the scene at the opening ceremony with his seminar on *Planetary Health in the 21st Century: Challenges and Solutions* in which he spoke on the issues needing to be addressed to ensure a sustainable future for our planet. Other keynote speakers included Rene Schwareback (Switzerland) who pleaded for more fundamental chemistry in ecotoxicology, Luisa Castillo (Costa Rica) who presented her research on the health and environmental effects of pesticides in developing countries using Central America as her case study, and Theo Brock (The Netherlands) who used examples from his work on the fate and effects of pesticides in freshwater ecosystems to illustrate his talk on *Community Ecotoxicology: Linking Ecosystem Structure and Function*.

The platform sessions were organised around a core of 7 major themes namely: Science and policies needed to achieve sustainable ecosystems; Extrapolation across temporal, spatial and biological scales; Linkages between ecosystem condition and human/animal health; Environmental chemistry; Environmental Toxicology; Risk assessment and management and finally life-cycle analysis and related topics. The poster sessions were the largest ever at a SETAC meeting in Europe with approximately 300 displayed per day.

The meeting was closed with two debates on controversial but topical issues. The "Precautionary Principle" which is beginning to play an increasingly prominent role in debates on all types of "environmental issues", whether human health, food safety or global warming and Genetically Modified Organisms, a subject that has evoked unprecedented passions, both verbal and physical in recent months.

*SETAC is an independent, non-profit professional society providing a interdisciplinary forum for individuals and institutions engaged in the study of environmental issues, management and conservation of natural resources, environmental education, and environmental R&D. More information about the activities of SETAC and forthcoming meetings may be obtained by visiting the website at [www.setac.org](http://www.setac.org).*