

THE PESTICIDES FORUM

John Garrod at the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, one of the Joint Secretaries of the Pesticides Forum, discusses the role of the group which advises the UK Government on the promotion and implementation of its policy relating to the responsible use of pesticides

Introduction

Established in May 1996 at the request of Ministers, the Pesticides Forum brings together a wide range of organisations that have an interest in the use of pesticides and their impact on the environment. The prime purpose of the Forum is to advise on and promote responsible pesticide use and to further the Government's pesticide minimisation policy. The Forum strongly supports the principles of Integrated Crop Management.

The Forum meets three times a year in February, June and October and is chaired by Dr David Shannon, Chief Scientist of MAFF. At the outset there were 16 members but this was increased to 23 in October 1998 to reflect the Government's emphasis on environmental and consumer protection. Current membership of the Forum is listed in the panel opposite. Meetings are attended by officials from Government Departments with an interest in Pesticides which includes MAFF, DETR, DTI, HSE, the Scottish Executive, the National Assembly of Wales and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Northern Ireland. The Secretariat is provided from MAFF's Pesticides Safety Directorate and the Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions' Chemicals and Biotechnology Division.

The majority of Pesticides Forum meetings are held in London but in 1999 the members held a meeting at Morley Research Station in Norfolk. The morning was taken up with a visit round the farm to see work in progress on environmentally friendly farming including a talk from the local Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group adviser. The members generally agreed that this meeting was particularly informative so plans are being made to hold another on-farm meeting this summer.

Objectives

Early work of the Pesticides Forum centred on the production of an Action Plan under four main objectives; collaboration and communication between organisations; promotion of effective transfer of new or improved technologies and techniques to farmers and their advisers; promotion of responsible pesticide use through better training and guidance; monitoring of progress. The action plan was consolidated and worked on in 1997 and 1998 and in 1999 was revised as a Framework of Objectives for the future.

Current Members of the Pesticides Forum

Country Landowners Association, The Pesticides Trust, Advisory Committee on Pesticides, Women's Farming Union, British Agrochemicals Association, ADAS, the Environment Agency, Wildlife and Countryside Link, Transport and General Workers Union, United Kingdom Agricultural Supply Trade Association, Agricultural Engineers Association, The Consumers Association, CWS Focus on Farming Practice, National Farmers' Union, BASIS Registration Ltd, Scottish Natural Heritage, Linking Environment and Farming, Scottish Farmers' Union, UK Register of Organic Farming Standards, The Game Conservancy Trust, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Scottish Agricultural College and the Fresh Produce Consortium/British Retail Consortium.

Sub-groups

These objectives highlighted specific areas of pesticide use that needed addressing and the members called for a more pro-active approach to the Forum's work. This resulted in the setting up of sub-groups, which convened their first meetings in February 2000, and in selecting important themes for consideration by individual Forum members (theme champions) on an ongoing basis for the 2000 meetings.

The two sub-groups are considering the following topics:

- How to get farmers and their advisers to take up new or improved technologies to reduce the environmental impact of pesticides
- What should the outcomes of pesticide risk reduction activities be and how can they best be measured

The sub-groups are able to co-opt non-members of the Forum to provide special expertise and one group is planning to hold workshops to address and discuss particular topics to reduce the environmental impact of pesticides. Advice and guidance documents for farmers and advisers may be one outcome of these workshops.

Topics discussed

Since 1996, the Forum has received presentations on a diverse range of topics. These are frequently accompanied by written papers that are distributed to a number of 'interested parties' and are posted on the Forum's website together with comprehensive minutes of the meetings.

Meetings of the Forum are not open, being restricted to members and invited speakers, but the website makes information on its activities widely available. The website can be accessed at www.environment.detr.gov.uk/pesticide_forum/index.htm

Some of the more recent topics to be discussed followed a presentation from Scottish Natural Heritage on the TIBRE (Targeted Inputs for a Better Rural Environment) initiative, an ADAS paper on CAP reform: Potential for Effects on Environmental Impact of Farming, a report from Central Science Laboratory on development of Pesticide Aquatic Risk Indicators and a presentation from the British Agrochemicals Association on Environmental Information Sheets for Pesticides.

Themes for 2000

Three themes have initially been chosen for consideration and discussion in 2000; Pesticide Disposal, Compatibility and Role of Decision Aid Schemes and Development of Crop Assurance Schemes. The intention is to return to these three topics at each meeting to keep abreast of new developments and allow feedback from all members on these important topics. These will be reviewed at the end of 2000 and new themes considered.

Publications

An Annual Report is published to review progress, both in terms of members' own activities and those of the Forum itself, and to lay down plans for the future. The 1996/97 and 1998 reports can be viewed on the website and the 1999 report is close to publication. The Annual Report is submitted to the Advisory Committee on Pesticides for comment and advice.

Further information

Further information on any aspect of the Pesticides Forum can be obtained from either of the secretaries:

- Dr John F. Garrod, Chemicals and Biotechnology Division, Department of The Environment, Transport and the Regions, 3/E5 Ashdown House, 123 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6DE
- Mr Nigel J Chadwick, Pesticides Safety Directorate, Room 317, Mallard House, King's Pool, 3 Peaseholme Green, York. YO1 7PX

FUNGAL METABOLITES: THE GOOD, BAD AND THE DEADLY

University of Wales Swansea, 22-27 April 2001

This 5-day International Symposium sponsored by the British Mycological Society will cover the whole range of activities of bioactive fungal metabolites and will address the problems and opportunities associated with these compounds.

Fungal metabolites have been used to develop several important medical and agrochemical agents, and continue to be investigated as a source of lead compounds in these industries. Strategies for the successful detection and exploitation of bioactive lead compounds will be examined. Some metabolites also have negative effects, particularly in relation to contamination of food raw materials. The ecology, production and control of mycotoxins will also be addressed in this Symposium.

The meeting will also assess whether metabolites produced by fungal biological control agents pose a risk to human and animal health and will include a review of measures to detect and/or prevent toxic fungal metabolites entering the food chain.

This timely conference will be of considerable interest to scientists, representatives of industry and government health, food and environmental services. A network discussion workshop will provide an opportunity for participants to identify new partners for collaborative research to more fully exploit the potential of bioactive metabolites from fungi.

Sessions include:

- Overview
- Fungi as a source of novel bioactive compounds
- Tools and methods to study fungal metabolites
- Optimising the production of bioactive metabolites
- Mycotoxins
- Risk assessment for Fungal Biological Control Agents
- Network discussions

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