

## Methyl bromide

### ...restrictions in California

The California Department of pesticide regulation has proposed easing restrictions on methyl bromide use that were put forward earlier in 2000. The restrictions include a 100-ft buffer zone for most applications, limits on worker exposure, and public notification requirements. The changes would limit when the restrictions could be enforced and provide exemptions for small business users.

### ...Mexico and the need for alternatives

If no suitable alternatives are readily available by 2005 when methyl bromide is to be phased out in the USA, producers fear that the situation will give producers in Mexico a 10-year advantage, as methyl bromide does not have to be phased out there until 2015. Increases in Mexican production have already had an adverse effect on the US industry, e.g. strawberry and tomato production in Florida.

## Agrochemical containers

### ...return

The Crop Protection Association (CPA) reports that less than 5% of the UK's agrochemicals are sold in returnable containers and that the proportion is unlikely to increase for a while. Several reasons are given for the poor uptake of the safety measure. A limited range of formulations are suitable for the system; problems are presented by flakes, powders and formulations with sediments. Commercial viability requires more than two cycles of use per year but many chemicals have specific uses that require use only once. Conversion of sprayers to use the containers can cost £700–£1000. The delay on the introduction of restrictions on farm-burning of containers is also seen by the farmer as lessening the pressure for change.

### ...disposal

The UK government has dropped plans to ban the burning of pesticide containers. The Crop Protection Agency (CPA) reports that the subject is likely to be decided by a far-reaching EU directive that could even cover the burning of garden waste. Although it is unlikely to get into UK law until 2006, the CPA, National Farmers Union and other bodies are starting to lobby for the exclusion of the farm incinerator. In the meantime, farmers are urged to follow best practice – maintain incinerator temperatures above 700°C to minimize the release of carbon particles and dioxins.

## Biocides Consultative Committee (BCC)

The Biocides Consultative Committee (BCC) is a new committee which will provide the UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the Health and Safety Commission (HSC) and Ministers with independent scientific advice on the evaluation of biocidal products which will be regulated under the new Biocidal Products Regulations scheduled to come into force in 2000. The BCC will be made up of an independent Chair and scientific experts in the fields of toxicology, ecotoxicology, occupational hygiene, microbiology, and efficacy, as well as several lay members to represent consumer, environmental and employee interests.

## Pesticides residues in organic food

In an interview on the BBC's *Countryfile*, Sir John Krebs, Chairman of the new Food Standards Agency, stated that there was no evidence to support the claim that organic food was more nutritious than conventional food. He also said that independent tests, commissioned by the BBC and carried out by the Eclipse Scientific Group

laboratory in Cambridgeshire, found that neither the samples of conventionally grown nor those of organic carrots contained any pesticide residues. Sir John's statements have been strongly contested by the Soil Association and Friends of the Earth.

## OP dips in the UK

According to sheep dip manufacturers and the National Office of Animal Health (NOAH), organophosphate (OP) dips are unlikely to return to the UK market until late autumn, despite the government giving the go-ahead for their return under interim arrangements. In the long term, ministers maintain that the containers must be redesigned so that they have closed delivery systems which minimise exposure to OP concentrate. The government has announced that the dips could be brought back onto the market if a vented tap were fitted to containers and labels were amended. The agreement to interim arrangements must be strictly time limited and would not extend beyond 31 August 2001. The Veterinary Products Committee must also approve the wording of new labels before products can be sold again.

## Snippets

...statistics from the US Department of Agriculture for 1997 to 1998 show that pesticide use in the major genetically modified (GM) crops can be up to 18% lower than those used in non-modified crops. Herbicide use dropped 12% in the 5 main soybean growing states even though the area of the crop almost doubled. Pesticide use dropped 18% in the 5 main cotton growing states to 6.28 kg/ha of active ingredients. Insecticide and herbicide use dropped 7% in the top 5 corn growing states with the introduction of European corn borer resistant and glyphosate- and glufosinate-resistant maize.

## RELATED JOURNAL

*Journal of Environmental Monitoring*, published by the Royal Society of Chemistry, reports on all measurement aspects of exposure assessment relating to outdoor, indoor and workplace environments. Monitoring of the environment for pesticide residues is one of the many topics which are covered in this journal.

Visit the journal's homepage at [www.rsc.org/jem](http://www.rsc.org/jem)

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