

UK pesticide tax dropped

The UK Chancellor of the Exchequer has decided to drop the Government's proposed pesticide tax in favour of the voluntary package of measures to the delight of the Crop Protection Association (CPA), the UK pesticide industry association, who strongly believed that a tax would not deliver the Government's objective of minimising the environmental impact of pesticide products. For details of the CPA measures, produced in association with the National Farmers Union, the National Farmers Union for Scotland, the Country Landowners Association, the National Association of Agricultural Contractors, the Agricultural Engineers Association and the UK Agricultural Supply Trade Association, see *Pesticide Outlook* 12(1), 4. Now the CPA has to put the measures in its package of measures into effect and demonstrate that they work.

Atrazine not a likely human carcinogen

An EPA science panel has concluded that the herbicide atrazine should not be classified as a likely human carcinogen. For over a decade the EPA called atrazine a possible carcinogen. Now, a new report from the EPA's Scientific Advisory Panel says that atrazine is either unlikely to be a human carcinogen or insufficient information is available to classify it. But the panel did conclude that animal studies indicate atrazine could have developmental effects in children. Exposure could delay the onset of puberty and could cause enlarged prostate in young males. The effect of atrazine on neurotransmitters in the brains of children could also permanently change behaviour.

EU legislation will reduce pesticide choice

The current EU review process is set to reduce the number of pesticide active ingredients available to the grower over the last 10 years from 850 to some 300 when the current process ends. And the range of uses for each compound could be restricted to large-scale crops; the process is insufficiently flexible to permit minor crop uses. Manufacturers favour the dropping of older, generic products. The lack of support for pesticide use in small crops is likely to raise the cost of crop production. The horticultural industry has been granted an extension to the use of crucial products beyond the 2003 deadline, possibly until 2006, to allow the development of alternative control methods or the generation of

data to support particular products. Representation on such products must be made to the EU Agricultural Commission in time for it to petition the EU Parliament in July 2001. The UK horticultural industry is to make its representation in conjunction with the industries in other EU countries. UK growers fear competition from food producers outside the EU who do not face the same restrictions and increased growing costs.

Pesticides in infant formulae and baby foods

EC Directives 99/50/EC and 99/39/EC set a maximum limit of 0.01 mg/kg for the level of individual pesticides that may be present in infant formulae and baby foods. These requirements were implemented into UK law in 2000, and come into force in July 2002.

These Directives also committed the European Commission to drawing up a further legislation to prohibit the use of certain more toxic pesticides in agricultural products intended for use in the manufacture of infant formulae and baby foods. These proposals were published by the Commission in July 2000 and were the subject of public consultations in August and September 2000.

The results of these consultations have now been published and show strong support for the proposals from health professionals and consumer organisations. They felt that the health of infants and young children should be afforded the highest priority and highlighted the concerns parents feel about infants and young children being exposed to pesticides. One consumer group felt the proposals did not go far enough, and proposed that only organically produced raw materials should be used in the production of infant and baby foods; another group felt that the scope of the proposals should be extended to cover all breast milk substitutes including medical foods for infants and young children.

Organisations responsible for enforcement bodies highlighted the resource implications of the proposals in terms of additional sampling and analysis costs, particularly if the scope of the Directives extended to pesticides used as seed coatings and on animal feedstuffs.

The legality of the Commission's proposals was challenged by a representative for pesticide manufacturers' which has requested that the proposals are withdrawn. It has been argued that specific

proposals to limit pesticides in infant and baby foods should be made in accordance with the system for authorisation of pesticides provided for by Directive 91/414, which requires the setting of maximum residue levels to be set on a case-by-case basis.

Pesticides to be assessed according to pollution of waterways

The EU Commission put 11 different pesticides on a recently published list of 32 hazardous chemicals which have long-term effects on living organisms in rivers, lakes and oceans. Within the European water framework guidelines, these substances will be monitored and some will be banned. The list includes hazardous substances including pesticides, heavy metals, flame retardants, and wood preservatives. The most dangerous substances will no longer be permitted to pollute waterways after a 2-year transitional period. The Commission will examine 4 pesticides by 2003 and will consider a long-term ban. These active ingredients are trifluralin; atrazine; chlorpyrifos; and endosulfan. Other substances on the list, considered less hazardous by the EU Commission, include alachlor, chlorfenvinphos, diuron, isoproturon and simazine. These substances will only be examined for their effects on surface waters. The proposal by the EU Commission still has to be passed by the European Parliament and the EU Council of Ministers. The EU Commission does not intend to revoke registration for individual pesticides on the list, but expects that the scrutiny will influence national and European approval of pesticides.

Organophosphates (OPs)

...OPs in drinking water

Bayer, Cheminova, Dow Agrosiences, Syngenta and Valent have presented the findings of their one year study on the level of OPs and their breakdown oxons in drinking water to the FIFRA Scientific Advisory Panel. Forty four community water systems, 27 described as under agricultural influence and 17 under urban influence, were investigated and 1103 samples analysed. Chlorpyrifos, diazinon and malathion were never detected; methamidophos, azinphos-methyl and acephate appeared in one of the samples. The oxons from azinphos-methyl and malathion appeared in one sample and the oxon from diazinon in two.

...US reassessment of OPs

An out-of-court settlement has been reached by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) of Washington, USA, that should speed up pesticide health risk assessments mandated by the 1996 Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA). Lawsuits had been filed by the NRDC against the EPA during 1999 charging it with missing deadlines under the FQPA. Under the agreement 39 organophosphate pesticides will be reassessed by the EPA before August 2002 and a timetable for the determination of cumulative pesticide risks when used together has been set. A chemical testing programme for possible endocrine disrupters is also to be launched and implemented.

Sainsbury's admonished

A complaint by a member of the public against a Sainsbury's advertisement which implied its British fruit and vegetables were free of pesticides has been upheld by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). The advert claimed that Sainsbury's preferred the use of natural pest controls such as ladybirds to chemical sprays. Yet pesticide data published by the UK Government revealed that over half of the fruit and vegetables sold by Sainsbury's (UK and imported) contained pesticide residues and UK grown 42%. In upholding the complaint the ASA ruled that the advert could be misleading to Sainsbury's customers as it implied that Sainsbury used natural farming methods on all their British fruit and vegetables.

Pesticide MRLs in UK foods

The UK food industry is being advised to take early action to ensure compliance with new Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for pesticides set by EC Directive 42/200/EC. The new Directive will come into effect on 1st July 2001 and will apply to a number of pesticide crop combinations with implementation resulting in these pesticides no longer having approval for use on the specified crops after this date. It will be legal to use up these products until 30th June 2001, but if a residue is found when tested after this date this will be considered a violation. This is particularly significant for processed product manufacturers since their products are typically stored for many months and may therefore be found to contain residues of pesticides legal before 30th June but illegal afterwards. In total there are 1935 EU proposals that will

change current UK MRLs many of which will be in force sometime this year.

Imidacloprid*...British Sugar and Bayer respond*

Bayer, the manufacturer of Gaucho (imidacloprid) herbicide denies suggestions that its product is being used unnecessarily. Gaucho has become part of the agronomic process used by growers because it reduces the requirement for planning and removes a large element of the need to walk fields at a time of year when hours are precious. According to British Sugar, it has no objection to growers making better use of projections to modify their needs for Gaucho treatment.

...Gaucho still not available in France

Bayer failed to gain approval for the insecticide Gaucho for application to sunflower crops in France. A temporary ban on distribution has been imposed 2 years ago. The French Agricultural Minister (Jean Glavany) will now await results from a study by independent experts about the health of bee colonies in France. This decision has been reached after scientists from a Commission for the Assessment of Pesticides failed to unambiguously rule out a connection between the application of Gaucho in sunflower crops and the decimation of bee colonies in some regions in France observed since 1996. According to honey producers, Bayer's product confuses their bees, which are unable to find their hives, but Bayer believes there are other causes of the declining bee population.

Methyl bromide*...phase-out poses problems in California*

A University of California-Davis researcher says the phase-out of the soil fumigant methyl bromide is expected to mean long-term losses for California strawberry farmers. The removal of methyl bromide is expected to have a significant effect on California's agriculture and over 25,000 people who are employed in its strawberry industry. California accounts for over 83% of the US total strawberry crop. Its strawberry growers use 4.6 M lbs/y of methyl bromide.

...Anticimex appeals against methyl bromide ban

Anticimex is appealing against the decision by Kemikalieinspektionen, Sweden, not to extend its approval for the pesticide methyl

bromide. The company says that the phasing out of methyl bromide use in Sweden should be coordinated with that in other countries. It uses the chemical for treating transported timber goods.

Snippets*...Ecuadorian shrimpers win fungicide case*

In Florida, Desarrollo Industrial Bioacuatico SA (aka Dibsa, shrimp farming unit of Seaboard Group) and Continental Grains have won a \$10 M suit against DuPont. The suit alleged that run off from the US of DuPont's Benlate (benomyl), used by banana producers in Ecuador, was damaging the shrimp farms. Other claims are pending.

...Pesticide scam

According to the World Health Organisation and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation, nearly 33% of pesticides sold in developing countries are mis-labelled, sub-standard, or even dangerous. Among the examples are pesticide products containing the wrong ingredients or hazardous contaminants. The two bodies are to formulate stricter regulations governing trade in pesticides to combat this problem, which costs \$900 M/y.

...pesticide support information in UK on the web

The Pesticide Safety Directorate is informing growers whether manufacturers are supporting their active ingredients in the run up to the EU deadline on its registration review of pesticides. The information is displayed on the website <http://www.pesticides.gov.uk>. Some 500 active ingredients are expected to be unsupported. They include fomesafen in the products Flex and Reflex T, important herbicides for the legume grower. Original reports that cypermethrin was not to be supported are untrue.

*...rise in the use of Pamira collection**system for pesticide containers in Germany*

Almost 50% or 1500 tonnes of waste packaging materials for pesticides were collected in Germany in 2000 via the Pamira packaging disposal system of the Industrial Agricultural Association (IVA) in Frankfurt. Waste collections increased by 13%. A large part of waste packaging is incinerated in cement works in 5 different regions. East German chemicals company Schwarze Pumpe is using the waste pesticide containers as raw material in methanol production.