

Dutch to tax pesticides

The government in the Netherlands has proposed a tax to reduce the use of pesticides from 2003. The income generated will be used to develop more environmentally friendly alternatives for combating weeds, pests and diseases. It is hoped that by 2005 at least 90% of companies handling pesticides will have voluntarily acquired an integrated crop production certificate showing that they are operating on a sustainable basis. If this figure is not achieved then a ban will be imposed on the use of chemical agents by non-certified companies. The agricultural sector is objecting to the proposed tax.

IPU maintaining status quo

Isoproturon (IPU) looks likely to remain widely used in the UK for the remainder of 2001, despite water company pressure for a ban on its use. There are no expected changes in legislation from the Pesticides Safety Directorate that will affect IPU use in Autumn 2001. IPU still has a strategic role to play in controlling key grass weeds and certain broad-leaved weeds. It is one of a limited number of options for grass weed control in winter barley and one a limited number of active ingredients controlling ryegrass in wheat and barley. But the problem of IPU and several other products that find their way into surface water is a significant problem for water companies. The IPU Stewardship Group recognises the need to protect surface water and has come up with a set of guidelines for the use of IPU.

Cefic and ECPA commitment to Rotterdam Convention

Since 1 April 2001, Cefic and the European Crop Protection Association (ECPA) have started implementing a unilateral initiative to support the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Procedures for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade. Under this initiative, approved by the Cefic Board in June 2000, Cefic members will notify their first annual export of chemicals and pesticides that are banned or severely restricted under Community legislation concerning the export and import of certain dangerous chemicals (Regulation 2455/92). Existing Community legislation already provides for notification of the first export ever of such chemicals, but this will now be done annually under this commitment. The process of completing a final European

Commission proposal implementing the Rotterdam Convention and getting it adopted by Council and Parliament will take at least two years (<http://www.cefic.org>)

Endocrine disruptors: new EC approach

The European Commission has decided to modify its strategy on endocrine-disrupting chemicals by depending mainly on two existing chemical programmes to evaluate the endocrine-disrupting properties of chemicals that are already being tested for other reasons. Initially, the strategy required evaluation of 66 potential endocrine disruptors on the Commission's priority list presented in Summer 2000. 46 substances are being considered for assessment, including 15 chemicals prioritised under the 1993 Existing Substances Regulation and 31 pesticides being evaluated under the 1991 Plant Directive. The Commission also intends to collect data on 435 candidate substances that still have inadequate endocrine disruptive data. Several previously identified substances have been eliminated.

Thiophanate-methyl risk assessment raises concerns

The US Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP) recently conducted further risk assessment research into thiophanate-methyl and its major metabolite, carbendazim. Studies have shown both thiophanate-methyl and carbendazim to be carcinogenic and teratogenic in animals. The OPP's research concluded that current levels of exposure to thiophanate-methyl through diet and drinking water may pose health risks for babies, children and females aged 13–50 years. The chronic aggregate risk was also of concern in children and females aged 13–50 years. The cancer aggregate risk from thiophanate methyl to the general public exceeded acceptable levels, as did the risk from carbendazim. Both thiophanate-methyl and carbendazim also threaten the health of small animals, fish and invertebrates. The manufacturer Cerexagri (formerly Elf Atochem North America) has issued a detailed response, criticising the OPP's preliminary risk assessment.

Possible industry alliance on triazoles

BASF, Bayer, Dow and Syngenta are considering forming an alliance to provide the data needed to apply for registration of

triazole fungicides with the US Environmental Protection Agency. The alliance may be affiliated to the European Triazole Assessment Group. At present triazole fungicides are used in the US under special emergency exemptions.

New European Directive

A directive amending Directive (91/414/EEC) regarding the placing of plant protection products on the market (2001/36/EC) has been released in the *Official Journal*. Amended were the requirements of the original Directive for submitting a dossier for authorisation when an active substance consists of, or contains, microorganisms. The new Directive presents a substantial transformation in the supply of information regarding human exposure and environmental risks from microorganisms. National Regulations must be enforced by 1 May 2002.

Snippets

...herbicide use in Belgium is to be lessened by rewarding farmers who use mechanical means to control weeds. Over the next 5 years, those who use mechanical means only will receive an annual bonus of £85/ha. Those who introduce strip spraying in row crops instead of conventional overall spraying will receive £28/ha.

...the EU is not expected to change its Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) fundamentally in 2002, although subsidies, in future, will be for good environmental practice. The UK and German governments have asked the EU to review CAP in the light of rural support, environmental sustainability and the expectations of consumers. The European Crop Protection Association (ECPA) is supporting this approach.

...following US reports that there were adverse effects on human health and the environment from the use of the insecticide, aldicarb, a review was conducted by the Australian National Registration Authority for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (NRA). Because application in Australia is by the use of granules below the surface of the soil, the NRA has declared aldicarb safe to use on cotton, citrus fruits and sugar. There will a closer monitoring programme over the next three years on the use of aldicarb in citrus orchards.