

COLUMA 2001

Brian Hicks, Editor of *Crop Protection Monthly*, reports on a weed control event held in France at the end of 2001

Introduction

Over 500 delegates attended the 18th International COLUMA Conference (Conférence sur la Lutte contre les Mauvaises Herbes) at the Palais des Congrès in Toulouse from 5–7 December 2001, with some 10% coming from 21 countries outside France. As with the Brighton *Weeds* Conference the previous month, which had also focused on weed control, delegate numbers were down in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers buildings in New York on 11 September. There were a further 250 participants at the regional weed control sessions on vines, arable crops and non-cultivated land. The conference provided a varied mix of some 150 presentations and 26 posters and a well-attended trade exhibition.

Toulouse had been badly shaken a few months earlier by an explosion at a fertiliser factory on the outskirts of the city when there were a number of fatalities. Many windows were shattered in the city centre, including the home of one of the journalists covering COLUMA. At least the crop protection industry has not had to contend with an incident of this gravity for several decades now.

40 years of COLUMA

Organised by AFPP (Association Française de Protection des Plantes), the French counterpart of the British Crop Protection Council, COLUMA is a triennial weed control conference and changes venue every time to a different regional centre, the previous ones having been held in Dijon in 1998 and Rheims in 1995. The 2001 conference was the 40th anniversary as the very first COLUMA Conference was held from 13–15 December 1961. Eleven companies made up the first COLUMA membership, all French except for DuPont and the British company, Murphy (later acquired by Dow). Even in 1961 COLUMA was quite international in scope, with speakers and session organisers from the UK, Spain and the Netherlands. Monsieur Faivre-DuPaigre, honorary president of COLUMA, attended that first conference and was presented with a commemorative award by 2001 conference president, Jean-Louis Pasquereau, technical manager of the co-operative Agri 18 (part of Epis-Centre), Bourges.

Emphasis on resistance

There have been some changes in typical conference content

since 1961, with an increasing focus on the environmental, resistance and safety aspects of herbicide use. AFPP has recently published its own guide to treatment of resistant weeds, which formed part of the delegate packs. A conference session was devoted to weed resistance, including a review by Jacques Gasquez (INRA Dijon). He commented that everywhere in Europe is affected by problems of weed resistance, with the exception of Luxembourg. France tops the list of countries in terms of number of resistant weed species that have been identified and characterised with a total of 27. It is followed by Spain (24), the UK (23), Belgium (18) and Germany (14). Mr Gasquez also made reference at a press briefing to increasing problems of glyphosate resistance, especially in Australia, but also in Chile, Eastern US and Canada.

Atrazine ban

One of the preoccupations for French farmers, advisors and suppliers attending was the future impact of the forthcoming atrazine ban, due to come into effect by 30 September 2002. There are a number of good replacement products available, but these are more expensive than atrazine. For those in intensive maize regions (often with triazine-resistant weed problems) the implications are minor. However, for those growing forage maize in livestock areas the increased costs will be significant according to some experts, although one of the COLUMA presentations suggested otherwise.

New herbicide developments

As at Brighton, there were some informative presentations on the new Aventis herbicide mesosulfuron and Bayer's propoxycarbazone-sodium, as well as the BASF herbicide and synergist picolinafen. Further details were also revealed about the development of the maize herbicides foramsulfuron, dimethenamid-P and S-metolachlor. Compared with metolachlor, use of S-metolachlor allows dose rates to be cut by 40% and Syngenta is also developing this new herbicide for use in France on soybeans, sorghum and sunflowers.

AFPP's 6th International Conference on Pests in Agriculture will be held from 4–6 December next year in Montpellier (www.anpp.asso.fr).