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INSIDE

New Restrictions on Two Pesticides to Protect Agricultural Workers..... 1

Azinphosmethyl: a Safe and Valuable Crop Protection Product for Farmers 2

Future of Our Food and Farms Summit..... 3

New Restrictions on Two Pesticides to Protect Agricultural Workers

Reprinted from Environmental News, 10/31/01.

The following article is a news release by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency related to the future of Azinphosmethyl (Guthion) and Phosmet.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has developed new restrictions on the use of two agricultural pesticides, azinphos-methyl and phosmet, to increase protection of agricultural workers, and assure that vital agricultural pest control needs are met. Azinphos-methyl and phosmet, first registered over 35 years ago, are important pest control tools for certain food crops.

For azinphos-methyl, 28 crop uses are being canceled, seven crop uses are being phased-out over four years, and eight crop uses will be allowed to continue "time-limited" registration for another four years. Prior to the expiration of the four-year period, EPA will conduct a comprehensive review of these eight crop uses, based on the latest scientific information, to determine if it should continue to allow registration. Azinphos-methyl is registered by Bayer AG and Makhteshim-Agan Industries. The crop uses being phased out in four years include those for: almonds, tart cherries, cotton, cranberries, peaches, pistachios, and walnuts; the crops with time-limited registrations include: apples/crab apples, blueberries, sweet cherries, pears, pine seed orchards, Brussels sprouts, cane berries, and the use of azinphos-methyl by nurseries for quarantine requirements.

For phosmet, three uses are being voluntarily canceled, nine crops are being authorized for use under specific terms for five years, and 33 crops are being approved for continued use. The new measures on phosmet are being implemented under an agreement with the registrant, Gowan Co. The three voluntary cancellations include use on: domestic pets, household ornamentals, and household fruit trees; phosmet, however, is used infrequently for these applications. For phosmet, a group of nine crops will be authorized for use for five years under specific terms: apples, apricots, blueberries, crab apples, grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears and plums/dried plums.

SEE EPA ON PAGE 2

"The new measures announced today on azinphos-methyl and phosmet will help decrease pesticide exposure and provide additional health protection for agricultural workers," said Stephen L. Johnson, EPA Assistant Administrator for Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances. "The best scientific expertise has been incorporated into these new precautions, and new health effects monitoring of agricultural workers will be required to determine if it is necessary to impose additional restrictions. Today's decision also provides time for farmers to make the transition to safer alternatives for the uses that are critical for crop production."

To enhance protection of agricultural workers during the phase-out and time-limited registration periods, a variety of stringent new precautions are being implemented to reduce exposure, including longer periods before a worker can enter a treated area, significantly limiting the number of applications, and prohibiting aerial application for almost all uses. During this period, EPA will also require that studies on the potential health effects on workers be conducted to help ensure that they are not exposed to unacceptable levels of these pesticides. If new information shows unreasonable risks, the Agency could take immediate action to remove any of these uses.

For the 28 crop uses being canceled for azinphos-methyl, there will be no phase-out period since there are viable alternatives. Seven crops are being allowed to continue for four years to facilitate transition to viable alternatives. Also, the Agency will allow a time-limited registration for four years for eight specific uses of azinphos-methyl. This four year period will allow farmers and others to develop and implement viable alternatives. Prior to the expiration of the time-limited registrations, the Agency will consider whether to authorize any further extension.

During the period that these uses remain for azinphos-methyl and phosmet, EPA will require new health effects data, new information relating to the potential benefits, and any other information that provides for more accurate assessment of the potential risks and benefits. As the Agency moves forward with these decisions, it will work with the manufacturers, growers, farm workers, and other affected parties to assure that these important actions are implemented in an expeditious and effective manner.

EPA has been evaluating azinphos-methyl and phosmet as part of the Agency's ongoing process to individually review the organophosphate pesticides and take necessary risk reduction measures as required under the Food Quality Protection Act. The Interim Reregistration Eligibility Documents (IREDs) for both azinphos-methyl and phosmet are now being issued, since extensive risk assessments for these pesticides have been completed. EPA will accept comments for 60 days on these IREDs, which will be available soon on EPA's web site at: www.epa.gov/pesticides.

Submitted by Peter Shearer, Extension Specialist in Tree Fruit Entomology. □

Azinphosmethyl: a Safe and Valuable Crop Protection Product for Farmers

The following is a press release issued by Bayer, Nov. 1, 2001.

Azinphosmethyl has proven itself a safe and valuable crop protection product for both farmers and consumers for over 45 years. Yet the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is proposing to withdraw or greatly limit its use on a number of fruits and vegetables, citing the agency's concerns about farm worker exposure.

Bayer disagrees with EPA's conclusions on this matter and encourages the agency to consider more carefully the scientific data on the subject, which convincingly demonstrate the safety of azinphosmethyl for farm workers.

Bayer contends that EPA's proposed action would unnecessarily take away from farmers, or too severely limit their use of, a valuable product they need for their crops. Bayer believes the requirements currently in place for the safe use of azinphosmethyl ensure protection for farm workers.

Bayer remains open to a cooperative dialogue with EPA concerning the varying interpretations of the risk assessment science related to this product and to a resolution of the differences in interpretation.

Bayer believes an important consideration in this issue is the recent risk assessment of azinphosmethyl conducted by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation, a globally recognized leader in worker safety regulation. This state agency found the safeguards now in place for the use of azinphosmethyl appropriate for farm worker protection.

At all times, Bayer's foremost priority is to ensure that its crop protection products are safe for farm workers and consumers.

How and to Whom Do I Submit Comments?

You may submit comments through the mail, in person, or electronically. To ensure proper receipt by EPA, it is imperative that you identify docket control number OPP-34131 for azinphosmethyl in the subject line on the first page of your response.

1. By mail. Submit comments to: Public Information and Records Integrity Branch,

SEE BAYER PAGE 3

Future of Our Food and Farms Summit

The 3rd Annual Future of Our Food and Farms Summit is on Nov. 29 and 30, 2001 at the Renaissance Philadelphia Hotel Airport in Philadelphia, PA.

Network with farmers, faith-based food providers, legislators and government officials, educators, agribusiness representatives, food wholesalers and retailers, food bank representatives, nutritionists, extension agents, and youth from the Mid-Atlantic region.

The Mid-Atlantic region has a wealth of resources - including some of the richest agricultural soils in the world. It has a diversity of residents - from urban populations - including Philadelphia, PA - to large rural populations including the Amish community in Lancaster, PA.

Competing uses for its vast resources have important implications for our future food system. As federal programs and policies are increasingly shifted to states, local governments and the non-profit sector to implement — it is important that farmers, consumers, industry, government and nonprofits collaborate.

The Summit is creating a place where these interests can come together to share ideas about problems and solutions affecting the farm and food system in the region. Our intent is to develop and promote recommendations that will guide the formation of farming and food policy in the Mid-Atlantic region, and set the stage to influence future federal, state and local government policies.

Some highlights: Four Secretaries of Agriculture from Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland and New Jersey will keynote the opening session. (The US Secretary, Anne Veneman, has been invited). A pre-Summit Hunger Congress, put together by the Food Resources Alliance (FRA), with invited state and federal legislators, will highlight evolving public policies impacting hunger in our region. JoAnn Connelly President of the Greater Philadelphia Food Bank will moderate this session. Thursday's dinner will be a feast of locally grown foods, put together by some of the region's top chefs, including Jill Horn, Delilah Winder, Jack McDavid, and Kevin von Klaus. Finally, with this year's Summit, we are initiating an annual award to be given to the person, organization, or business that has done the most to benefit the Mid-Atlantic food and farming system.

We will disseminate policy recommendations that grow out of discussions at the Summit to leaders in the farm and food system throughout the Mid-Atlantic region.

At the Summit you will hear from experts and your peers about how the region's food system works today - and where it is going - and how we can help to shape it for the future. Learn about inner-city supermarkets, minority entrepreneurs, genetically modified food (GMO's), women in agriculture, rotational grazing, youth involvement in agriculture, marketing to today's health conscious consumers, cooperatives, ethnic produce -and much, much more!

Visit our web site at <http://www.foodfarm.org> or for more information, contact: Meredith Stone at 215-568-0830 • Ext.10 or e-mail fmtrust@libertynet.org. □

BAYER FROM PAGE 2

Information Resources and Services Division (7502C), Office of Pesticide Programs, Environmental Protection Agency, Ariel Rios Bldg., 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20460.

2. In person or by courier. Deliver comments to: Public Information and Records Integrity Branch, Information Resources and Services Division, Office of Pesticide Programs, Environmental Protection Agency, Rm. 119, Crystal Mall #2, 1921 Jefferson Davis Hwy., Arlington, VA. The PIRIB is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays. The PIRIB telephone number is (703) 305-5805.

3. Electronically. Submit electronic comments by e-mail to: "opp-docket@epa.gov," or you can submit a computer disk as described in this unit. Do not submit any information electronically that you consider to be CBI. Electronic comments must be submitted as an ASCII file, avoiding the use of special characters and any form of encryption. Comments and data will also be accepted on standard computer disks in WordPerfect 6.1/8.0 or ASCII file format. All comments in electronic form must be identified by the docket control number OPP-34131 for azinphosmethyl. Electronic comments may also be filed online at many Federal Depository Libraries.

*Submitted by Peter Shearer,
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Pesticide User Responsibility: Use pesticides safely and follow instructions on labels. The pesticide user is responsible for proper use, storage and disposal, residues on crops, and damage caused by drift. For specific labels, special local-needs label 24(c) registration, or section 18 exemption, contact RCE in your County.

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