



MEDIA RELEASE

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APVMA Concludes Its Review of Atrazine

The APVMA today announces that it has concluded the final component of its review into atrazine, a herbicide used in Australia for decades to control grass and weeds.

"The atrazine review was distinguished by ongoing investigations at a national and international level about potential environmental and human health concerns', Dr Simon Cubit, Manager Public Affairs, said today.

"The conclusion of this review, which has taken many years to finalise, has supported the continuing registration and use of atrazine in Australia subject to label changes to further reduce the risk of contamination of waterways."

The APVMA undertook a major review of atrazine from 1995 to 1997 and implemented a series of regulatory actions post 1997 which resulted in cancellation of home/garden uses and changes to product labels to protect worker safety and the environment. The Australian Drinking Water Guidelines for atrazine were also updated at that time.

"The conclusion of this final component of the review will see the APVMA implement a small number of additional regulatory actions proposed in an interim report in 2004 whose effect will be to further tighten and better define restrictions applied since 1997."

"In addition, the APVMA has acted on new information suggesting a potential risk of atrazine entering waterways through the use of the chemical post-emergence on triazine tolerant canola in raised bed cropping systems. The APVMA is requiring registrants to collect data to enable it to further evaluate this issue," Dr Cubit said.

The atrazine review was initially prompted by concerns over human and animal carcinogenicity, environmental impacts including the potential for atrazine to contaminate ground and surface water and residue and efficacy uncertainties.

Concerns about carcinogenicity were found to be unwarranted and regulatory actions in 1997 addressed the remaining issues including maximum residue limits (MRLs), the efficacy issue and contamination of waterways.

The key debate since then has focussed on concerns that low concentrations of atrazine may cause developmental effects in frogs. This issue has been the subject of significant scientific investigation both in Australia and the United States. In both jurisdictions authorities have concluded that the weight of evidence does not support the claimed effects.

"The APVMA however recognises that the debate continues and will keep a watching brief on scientific developments. The APVMA has requested consideration by the Office of Chemical Safety (OCS) of one emerging line of research that proposes a new mode of action (MOA) for atrazine that has not previously been considered," Dr Cubit said.

"Should a scientific consensus emerge or any of these new lines of research generate legitimate areas of concern, the APVMA will initiate a new review."

Details of the review findings and the new regulatory requirements for the use of atrazine are set out in the report 'Atrazine Final Review Report and Regulatory Decision'. The report, background information and a stakeholder impacts statement are available on the APVMA website at <http://www.apvma.gov.au/chemrev/atrazine.shtml>.

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