

## 320 pesticides to be withdrawn in July 2003

***Some 320 substances used in plant protection products (PPPs) – including insecticides, fungicides and herbicides – are to be withdrawn from the market in 2003 as part of the European Commission’s new approach to the evaluation of active substances in plant protection products. This aims to improve safeguards to ensure that all such products in use are safe for the environment and human health. Users, wholesalers and retailers of plant protection products will need to be aware of whether the products they use or sell are likely to be withdrawn, so as to prevent them being left with stocks of unusable material. Those concerned should contact their national authority to check the authorisation status for any particular product.***

The current approach requires manufacturers to “defend” plant protection products i.e. prove that their products reach the required safety standards. Most of the products to be withdrawn will be as a result of manufacturers declining to defend their products for economic reasons following notification procedures set up by the Commission in 2000-2001. Where substances are to be defended, the manufacturers must submit complete data packages to the designated authorities in the Member States and to the European Food Safety Authority by May 2003. Defended substances may continue to be authorised until such time as a decision is taken as regards the safety status of the product in question.

A few temporary derogations will apply in some Member States for some “essential uses” – this is for products that are not defended by the manufacturer, but for which there is no readily available alternative for the crops in question and no concerns linked to their restricted and time-limited use.

The loss of these 320 substances is not the end of the story. Up to 150 substances could also be withdrawn in July 2003 under a second notification call that the Commission expects to adopt shortly for another 200 substances. It is expected that industry will decide not to defend up to 150 of these substances and the Commission will decide on their fate early in 2003.

Considering the 20 already withdrawn, the 320 about to go and the 150 that may follow, this will represent a loss in 2003 of more than 60% of all the substances that were on the market in 1993. The Commission aims to have taken decisions on all defended substances before the end of 2008 thus completing the harmonisation of active substances allowed in pesticides in the EU.

### **Note to Editors:**

Directive 91/414 on the authorisation, use and control of plant protection products - insecticides, fungicides, herbicides etc. - was adopted in 1991. It sets up a harmonised authorisation system for the active substances used in plant protection products at EU level. Member States may then approve products containing such EU agreed substances for use on their territory.

The 1991 rules make EU authorisations of active substances subject to a positive outcome of safety evaluations, for which producers must present data.

At the time of adoption of Council Directive 414/91 in 1991, there were over 800 such substances authorised for use in the Member States.

The Commission highlights that there are measures already in place to ensure that the active substances currently in use are monitored with a view to identifying levels in excess of the maximum residue limits (MRLs). This allows Member States to take the necessary corrective action to ensure the safe use of the plant protection products implicated and thus to ensure that there is no risk to health.