

Dow Chemical to Quit Selling 2 Herbicides, Ending EPA Battle

By a WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter

MIDLAND, Mich.—Dow Chemical Co. said it plans to stop selling two controversial herbicides in the U.S., ending a four-year battle with the Environmental Protection Agency over use of the chemicals.

But in announcing it would quit selling 2,4,5-T and Silvex, a related substance, Dow continued to insist that "the great weight of scientific evidence" shows that the weed-killers can be used without posing undue risks to human or animal safety.

Dow no longer has any significant commercial stake in the chemicals in the U.S. It quit making 2,4,5-T in 1979, in the wake of an EPA order halting its use in forests, in pastures and along power-line rights of way. The EPA had based its ban on animal test results and a high level of miscarriages among women in an Oregon basin shortly after the chemical was applied to forests there. The agency continued to allow use of the chemical in rangelands and rice fields, but Dow didn't bother to produce any of it in the U.S. for just those uses.

Dow spent \$10 million trying to get the EPA to change its stance on the chemicals. But company officials recently came to believe that, with the EPA lately under renewed scrutiny, the chances of getting a reversal of the ban were slim.

Shortly after Dow's pullout announcement Friday, in fact, the EPA extended its ban on the use of 2,4,5-T to rangelands and rice fields as well. The EPA said the withdrawal of Dow, "the major registrant and most vigorous proponent" of the use of the chemicals, cleared the way for the wider ban.

A Dow spokesman said that the company now would end U.S. sale of its old, domestically produced inventories of the chemicals and resale in this country of foreign-made supplies of the chemicals. But he said Dow would continue to make 2,4,5-T in its New Zealand plant for sale in New Zealand, Australia and other countries. The company also said it would cancel all of its remaining U.S. registrations for products containing the chemicals.

The EPA said the pesticide includes dioxin as a byproduct. Dioxin has been linked to skin irritation and possibly to cancers.