SAN BERNARDINO, CALIF.
SUN
D. 60,000

SEP 30 1971

Monsanto Says It Will Limit Sale of Controversial PCB

By WILLIAM B. MEAD

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said yesterday that the nation's only producer of the industrial chemical known as PCB has promised to stop selling the possible health hazard compound to food and feed plants.

FDA Commissioner Charles C. Edwards also said that National Cash Register Co. has discontinued use of PCB in the manufacture of carbonless carbon paper, the primary source of PCB-type compounds found in recycled paper for food packaging.

In addition, J. C. LaCroix, vice president of Federal Paper Board Co., the nation's largest producer of recycled paper, said his firm and other recyclers were screening carbonless carbon paper out of their mills to avoid a recurrence of PCB contamination.

Edwards told a news conference that "alarmist-seeking headlines" had blown the PCB problem out of proportion, creating unwarranted public alarm and a feeling of still another crisis in the food supply.

PCB's, short for polychlorinated biphenyls, are chemicals made solely by Monsanto Chemical Co. and are widely used in machinery, primarily as a heat transfer fluid in transformers. Edwards said Monsanto had advised FDA officials that it would limit PCB sales to "essential closed system uses, with no use in food or feed plants."

In laboratory rats, PCB's caused skin and liver ailments and birth defects.

Last July, PCB residues were found in four-cents of chicken and eggs. The contamination was traced to leaky machinery at a North Carolina paint manufacturing fish meal later fed to the chickens.

Earlier this month, PCB residues were found in meats in which Procter & Gamble Co. processes at its Memphis plant. The Agriculture Department said yesterday that a three-state survey proved the contaminated meat an "isolated occurrence."

Of the overall threat from PCB's Edwards said: "The alarm is greater than the evil justify . . . PCB's are a potent l but not immediate health hazard . . . We are taking effective, adequate and positive steps to deal with whatever problem or potential problems that PCB's are likely to pose to human health."

The FDA disclosed earlier this week it found PCB contamination of food packaging materials made from recycled paper. At least two food products — shelled walnut meats and noodles — picked up unacceptable high PCB levels from the packages, the FDA said.

Edwards said National Cash Register reported it had stopped using PCBs in copy paper June 1. Edwards acknowledged, however, that the chemical might be passed on from reams of copy paper previously purchased by industry.

But in an interview, LaCroix said recyclers do not purchase office waste paper and hence could prevent processing of wastes containing high levels of PCBs.

AUGUSTA, MAINE
KENNEBEC JOURNAL
D. 16,000

OCT 7 1971

To file bill banning PCB

BY WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — Rep. William D. Hathaway said Wednesday he plans to file a bill to ban distribution of the widely used industrial chemical polychlorinated biphenyls or PCB. The measure would prohibit its distribution in interstate commerce.

Hathaway cited several instances in recent months where large quantities of food have had to be destroyed because they were contaminated by PCB which he called a "highly dangerous" chemical.

The Congressman noted that excessive levels of PCB have shown up in cartons made of recycled paper. He called for improvements in the recycling process to eliminate the hazard.

From the desk of
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