

Pesticide Trade Told to Expect Increased Tightening of the Laws Set to Govern Toxic Products

Pesticides manufacturers have not seen the end of the tightening-up procedures for enforcement of the federal pesticide law by the Department of Agriculture that have been developing in the Agricultural Research Service for the past several months. Producers can expect some new labeling requirements from the department—just when is still uncertain—aimed at providing greater assurances that users of the pesticides understand more fully the hazards involved in the use of toxic materials.

This is the message that manufacturers got from a one-day hearing called last week by the Fountain government operations investigation subcommittee of the House on USDA's administration of the federal insecticide, fungicide and rodenticide act.

Criticisms Called Justified

Department officials called to explain their handling of the law's broad registration and labeling provisions, agreed that the serious criticisms leveled by the General Accounting Office last year (OPD, 9/16/68, pg. 3) were justified and reported that corrective steps are being taken.

Also, said Dr. Harry W. Hays, director of the pesticides regulations division of ARS, the department is concerned over the effectiveness of pesticide cautionary labeling and has commissioned the University of Illinois to make an in-depth study of the adequacy of labeling as a prelude to strengthening requirements in this area.

The department wants to know how the labels are interpreted—what they mean to various people.

In addition, he continued, pesticide registrants, besides submitting toxicological data concerning the pesticide active ingredients and copies of the label when registering a product, are also being asked to submit information on the package or container since it has been found that some pesticides have been packaged

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in toy-like containers attractive to children.

Committee members and staff aides were sharply critical of what they term "inconsistency" in approved labels for some products. A case in point was products registered and sold for use in killing ants, rats and other household pests.

The labeling carries the statement that the pesticide should be kept out of reach of children, it was pointed out, but it was asked how this can be done when the pesticide is to be used around the floor and other areas accessible to children.

Another instance that drew much attention from the committee was the use of lindane vaporizers.

This product was labeled with the cautionary statement that care should be taken to prevent food contamination from use of the chemical, but at the same time, it was stated, it was being authorized for use in restaurants.

Lindane Use Canceled

The department acted last fortnight to cancel lindane products for use in vaporizing devices after tests at the Agricultural Research Center, under simulated restaurant conditions, showed that within five days' exposure practically all foods, packaged and unpackaged, contained illegal residues of lindane.

The lindane story included testimony that Food & Drug Administration and the Public Health Service had expressed concern over the danger to public health in use of the chemical as well as over the failure of USDA, until recently, to do anything other than ask for documentary evidence of the dangers. This drew a comment from committee members, Clarence M. Brown of Ohio that "inconsistency in government is overwhelming."

Turning to Rep. Brown, chairman L. H. Fountain of North Carolina remarked:

"The longer you are here the more you are going to be overwhelmed about how things operate in the government."

Then to the USDA officials, he commented:

"I'm a great advocate of research, but what we need now is action. This is incredible. You make the FDA look good."

Mr. Fountain's committee recently completed another in a series of investigation of laxity in FDA's law enforcement ac-

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