EPA Tightens Restrictions On Pesticides

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EPA) — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is moving forward to implement the agency's May 2009 final rule revoking tolerances, or residue limits, for the pesticide carbofuran. EPA continues to find that dietary exposures to carbofuran from all sources combined are not safe. "The evidence is clear that carbofuran does not meet today's rigorous food-safety standards," said Steve Owens, assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances. "EPA has carefully evaluated the scientific issues and has provided more than 500 days of public comment on this decision. It is now important to move forward with the needed public health protections, especially for children." Short-term health effects include headache, sweating, nausea, diarrhea, chest pains, blurred vision, anxiety and general muscular weakness. EPA encourages growers to switch from carbofuran to safer pesticides or other environmentally preferable pest control strategies. Since the tolerances are being revoked, EPA reminds growers that carbofuran should not be applied to any food crops after December 31, 2009. Use of carbofuran after this date could result in adulterated food products, which would be subject to enforcement by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The United States has a safe and abundant food supply, and everyone should continue to eat a variety of foods, as recommended by the federal government and nutrition experts. During the objection period, the chemical company FMC Corporation, which manufactures carbofuran, and three grower associations submitted objections to EPA's tolerance revocations and requested an administrative hearing. EPA has concluded that the regulatory standard for holding an evidentiary hearing has not been met. EPA's explanation about why a hearing is not warranted, and the reasons for denying the objections are available on the web and will be published soon in a Federal Register notice. As part of the administrative process, FMC may appeal the revocation of the carbofuran tolerances to a federal circuit court of appeals. EPA's May 2009 action to revoke carbofuran tolerances was the culmination of a regulatory process that began in 2006 when the agency published its risk assessments for carbofuran and determined, in August 2006, that no uses were eligible for reregistration. While FMC has voluntarily canceled 22 carbofuran uses, the elimination of these uses was not sufficient to allow the agency to make a finding that combined dietary exposures to carbofuran from food and water are safe. The process to cancel the remaining carbofuran registrations is under way and will address unacceptable risks to farmworkers during pesticide application and to birds in and around treated fields. More information: http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/reregistration/carbofuran/carbofuran_noic.htm [1].

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[1] http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/reregistration/carbofuran/carbofuran_noic.htm