
EPA/IR-4 Technical Working Group Meeting

The EPA/IR-4 Technical Working Group (TWG) has convened a series of meetings between the IR-4 Headquarters staff and key scientists from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), with the objective to produce a more efficient system of IR-4 data submission and EPA review. These meetings have been held at approximately quarterly intervals, generally at the offices of one or the other organization. A TWG meeting was held on October 1, 2002, in Crystal City, Virginia. Participants included representatives of EPA, IR-4, USDA, California Dept. of Pesticide Regulations (CDPR), and PMRA Canada.

Dan Kunkel, Steve Robbins, and Hoyt Jamerson went through the steps in the development of OPP's Workplan for pesticide tolerance petitions. IR-4's potential projects are merged with registrants' priorities to create a list of 400 uses for review. The Registration and Science Divisions at EPA negotiate with each other to narrow the list to a set of petitions that can reasonably be expected to be reviewed during the next fiscal year. Generally, EPA chooses petitions grouped around active ingredients (e.g., a set of imidacloprid petitions, a set of sulfentrazone petitions, etc.). IR-4 will continue to focus its efforts on newer, lower risk chemistries. John Redden reported on the human health risk assessments that have been performed at EPA on various pesticide/crop proposed uses. The goal for Fiscal Year 2003 is to conduct one risk assessment per month.

Keith Dorschner, Hoyt Jamerson, and Jeff Herndon discussed the issue of agrichemical tolerances in alfalfa fields in which grasses are present. Hoyt confirmed that tolerances are needed for both alfalfa and grass for products to be legally used in such fields. Keith suggested that alfalfa tolerances include invasive grasses (weeds) in the tolerance expressions, but this would not include grasses that are intentionally planted with the alfalfa. A new crop group to cover these situations was suggested. IR-4 will continue to work towards a resolution of this issue.

Keith displayed ant bait stations of the type being used in Hawaii for tropical crops. California is also interested in these stations. Jeff Herndon will bring the demos to the Chemistry Science Advisory Committee (ChemSAC) for review.

Jeff discussed the Threshold of Regulation concept, a proposal still under review by the Health Effects Division which is intended for compounds with a full or nearly full risk cup. The idea is that a product use which results in no detectable residues at a 10X treatment would be classified as a non-food use at the normal 1X use rate.

Johannes Corley talked about the commercial ginseng industry. It normally takes three to four years after planting for ginseng to be harvestable. Thus, a product that would be applied in the first year or two may be eligible for registration as a non-food use. Johannes also proposed a reduced residue data set for fenhexamid on asparagus ferns for disease control. Jeff Herndon will take the proposal to ChemSAC for approval.

Pat Cimino presented the EPA Minor Use Team update. The critical uses list was acknowledged as being increasingly out-of-date, and may be reassessed by EPA. An Endangered Species Act lawsuit has triggered an EPA requirement to review petitions with this Act in mind, which could have a major impact on minor uses. The NRDC objections over the lack of use of the 10X safety factor in some registration decisions may also have a major impact.

Overviews were presented by Debbie Edwards of EPA, Bob Holm of IR-4, Roberta Firoved of California Dept. of Pesticide Regulation, and Ken Campbell of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Roberta noted that she is leaving CalDPR to work with the California Rice Commission. Great progress has been made in the Workshare Program with EPA under Roberta's leadership that has resulted in the acceleration of registrations for many of the newer products.

Alan Tomlin, Ken Campbell, and Imme Gerke discussed different aspects of the IR-4-type program that is being initiated in Canada. They plan to have six Field Research Centers and three analytical laboratories. Study Directors will be based in Ottawa. This organization will continue the cooperative studies that have been conducted by IR-4 and Canada since the mid-90's.

Steve Schaible discussed a proposed Reduced Risk web site at EPA that would include a description of the Reduced Risk Program, criteria for acceptance of pesticide uses, etc. Imme Gerke stated that PMRA will accept EPA's decisions on Reduced Risk classification.

Van Starner talked about the agricultural training tour that he is planning for September or October of 2003, to be called "Beyond the Appalachian Trail". The tour will cover parts of Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland during the harvest period for apples, grapes, and raspberries. Post-harvest issues will be discussed at some locations.

The next Technical Working Group meeting is scheduled for January 30, 2003.

Article by Ken Samoil