



IRAC Comment on ECPA release on loss of insecticides in minor crops in Europe

The Insecticide Resistance Action Committee (IRAC) has for some time been highlighting its considerable concern at the removal of many crop protection insecticides from the European market. IRAC strongly believes that this continuing reduction in the toolbox of available insecticides inevitably leads to an increased risk of the development of resistance to remaining products. This view was reinforced by a recent release from the European Crop Protection Association (ECPA) who declared that "with the removal of many crop protection products used to treat minor crops, there is an increased risk of resistance to the products remaining on the market. The continued production of many fruits and vegetables in Europe is threatened by the lack of products to protect them from pests and diseases."

ECPA highlighted the fact that this is a particular problem in minor crops and they point out that although there is a vast range of fruit and vegetables available in our supermarkets, many of these are considered as 'minor crops' as the number of hectares grown is low compared to other crops. They are of the view that the production of some of these crops could be under threat in Europe as agrochemical companies increasingly find it economically unviable to maintain registration and use of crop protection products in these limited niche markets (minor crops). The ECPA release declares that "EU production of some of these agricultural crops could simply disappear with downstream consequences for growers, processors and consumers".

Although this is a clear issue for minor crops, the problem is not restricted to them. For example, the deregulation of a number of organophosphate insecticides that were very effective for the control of the Pollen beetle (*Meligethes aeneus*) in oilseed rape crops in many European countries has resulted in almost total reliance on the synthetic pyrethroids. Exclusive use of this group of insecticides has led to the development of resistance to them in many countries including France, Poland, Germany and several Scandinavian countries.

One of the central themes of IRAC's approach to effective IRM has been an insistence that sequences, alternations or rotations of insecticides with different modes of action (MoA) may be an effective way to prevent the build up of resistance. In the case of pollen beetles, repeatedly using the same pyrethroid MoA led to resistance problems that did not exist when alternative organophosphate compounds were also available. The ECPA report highlights the fact that similar problems are likely to arise in a whole range of minor crops where registrations are no longer supported.

The ECPA release also rightly indicates that the European crop protection industry strongly supports and is willing to contribute to a simplified and streamlined regulatory process that adequately addresses minor uses. "Streamlined procedures are required to ensure that suitable crop protection solutions are available to supply niche markets, without compromising existing measures to protect consumers, operators and the environment". Such measures will be essential if resistance problems are to be avoided. IRAC believes the situation will be exacerbated once comparative assessment is introduced as part of European pesticide legislation.

Some temporary measures are in place to ensure that certain compounds for essential uses are preserved, particularly where there are no suitable alternatives, and products containing these active substances will be allowed to remain on the market until June 2007, allowing their use in specific crops. Given the increasing difficulty of discovering new active ingredients that pass increasingly stringent regulatory hurdles, IRAC is of the view that this modest period is unlikely to be sufficient to ensure new products are available in all the niche markets under threat.

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