



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

We initiated this review to evaluate the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) activities to implement the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA) of 1996. We sought to determine whether EPA allows for sufficient public participation in the pesticide decision-making process.

Background

FQPA changed the way EPA regulates pesticides. FQPA emphasized the potential for infants and children to be especially sensitive to pesticides and the need to provide them adequate protection. FQPA imposed many new requirements on EPA, including the need to review and reregister older pesticides to ensure they meet newer standards.

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional and Public Liaison at (202) 566-2391.

To view the full report, click on the following link:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2006/20051019-2006-P-00003.pdf

To view attachments to EPA's response, click on:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2006/20051019-2006-P-00003A.pdf

Changes Needed to Improve Public Confidence in EPA's Implementation of the Food Quality Protection Act

What We Found

This is the first in a series of planned reports on the Agency's FQPA implementation efforts. To ensure adequate protection of children, FQPA required EPA to make significant changes to the pesticide reregistration process. Despite numerous changes to the process, internal and external stakeholders expressed continued reservations over aspects of the process.

EPA allowed public comment periods when developing the Agency's major FQPA science policy papers, and developed and implemented a public comment policy for all pesticide reregistrations in 2002. Prior to this policy, however, the Office of Pesticide Programs did not always solicit public comments prior to issuance of final pesticide reregistration decisions. We believe EPA must ensure that at least one public comment period is held prior to final pesticide reregistration decisions. Providing opportunities for public participation is important for increasing transparency, improving decision making, and increasing overall public confidence.

Though EPA has an on-going research agenda related to the protection of subgroups, OPP lacks a methodology to identify and assess major subgroups of consumers, such as farm children, in the pesticide reregistration decision making process. EPA should respond promptly and directly to requests and petitions from external stakeholders. Such a methodology and responsiveness are needed to improve public confidence.

What We Recommend

We recommend that EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs allow at least one formal public comment period prior to the issuance of final and interim reregistration decisions. We recommend that the Office develop a defined methodology for considering subgroups, and work with the Office of Research and Development to continue to address these issues. We also recommend that EPA respond promptly to requests and petitions from external stakeholders. EPA generally agreed with the recommendations, although the Agency expressed concern that our report did not sufficiently discuss their efforts. We made revisions when appropriate.