

STATUS OF EPA LABEL GUIDANCE PROPOSAL ON DRIFT. Robert E. Wolf, Extension Specialist, Biological and Agricultural Engineering, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506.

The incidence and impact of spray drift has been and continues to be of concern. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has responsibility to ensure that pesticide use does not cause unreasonable adverse effects to human health and the environment. As a way for the EPA to broaden its understanding of the science and predictability of spray drift new studies were requested in the process of registration or reregistration of crop protection products by the manufacturers.

In 1990, the Spray Drift task Force (SDTF) was formed in response to the EPA's spray drift data requirements. The SDTF is a consortium of 38 agricultural chemical companies that spent approximately eighteen million dollars to support the reregistration of nearly 2,000 existing products and the registration of future products. Aerial, ground, air blast, and chemigation field studies were conducted establishing a drift database (40 reports) for the EPA. Computer models predicting drift and risk assessment are being developed from the database.

In 2001, the EPA developed draft document (PR Notice – OPP-00730) regarding labeling guidance for the purpose of informing pesticide registrants, applicators and other individuals responsible for pesticide applications with improved and more consistent product label statements for controlling pesticide drift. Public comment regarding any aspect of the PR notice was sought by the EPA for a period of 90 days which was later extended two more times.

More than 5000 comments were received from many public and private sectors, for and against, either in part or totally. Many letters were originated by various trade organizations. The EPA has since met with many major agribusiness trade groups to help each other understand the issues. Most of the responses were against the proposed 'zero tolerance', '10 MPH' wind limit, and the '4 and 10 foot' boom height limits for ground and aerial respectively. Most thought the proposal was completely unworkable and some felt the proposal had not gone far enough.

The EPA is planning to hold public 'listening' sessions during the winter 2002 at a few selected locations around the country. At the time of this writing the locations and dates these sessions have not been announced. Upon completion of the listening sessions the EPA plans to bring everything together that they have read and heard and draft a revised proposal for comment. This is expected to take place 2003.

In the meantime, the EPA continues to make decisions regarding labeling as new registrations applications come in or they complete reregistration of older products. Registrants have four options for submitting: (1) go with current draft labeling; (2) propose something else that is at least as protective that is acceptable; (3) go with labeling previously required under a RED for that pesticide; (4) go with old standard – "Do not allow drift".

For more information about the EPA's view on spray drift and to monitor the progress of the developments with this issue link to following web sites.

<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/citizens/spraydrift.htm>

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