

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE PESTICIDE APPLICATOR RECERTIFICATION PROGRAM IN INDIANA. William G. Johnson, Glenn R.W. Nice, and Fred Whitford, Associate Professor, Weed Science Extension Specialist, and Director of Pesticide Programs, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907.

Farmers who purchase and apply restricted use pesticides in Indiana are required to hold a private applicator pesticide license. To maintain the license over time, the pesticide use governing agency in Indiana, which is the Office of the Indiana State Chemist (OISC) requires growers to attend two, county-based Pesticide Applicator Recertification Programs (PARP) within a three-year period or retake the certification test. As expected, most prefer to attend the PARP meetings as opposed to taking an exam.

PARP meetings are organized by county Extension educators. The structure of the meeting is somewhat flexible, but OISC mandates that attendees are exposed to a 30 minute regulatory topic and an additional 120 minutes of pest or pesticide management topics. Regulatory topics in the past have included issues such as drift management and bulk storage rules and regulations. The objective of the regulatory topic requirement is to keep farmers up to date on legislative issues pertinent to pesticide use or address pesticide management issues, such as herbicide drift. In 2005, the PARP regulatory topic involved environmental and regulatory issues associated with atrazine herbicide use in Indiana. This topic was chosen because of frequent detections in surface water supplies and the new regulations regarding atrazine mitigation in surface water supplies in the U.S.

We developed a slide show that outlined the extent of the issue in Indiana, highlighted the new monitoring and mitigation program put in place by the registrant and EPA, and discussed various practices for reducing off-site movement of atrazine into surface water. To assess the impact of this program, we asked attendees to complete a short survey about the program which addressed their current knowledge about the importance of the issue, their awareness of the limitations regarding application spelled out specifically on the label, and how much they thought their yields would be reduced or herbicide expenses would increase, and whether they would modify their atrazine use patterns.

Survey responses were collected from over 1900 individuals. The survey showed that 33% of the growers were concerned about the environmental issues associated with atrazine use before the PARP program and over 60% were concerned after the program. However, over 90% of the growers feel that atrazine or atrazine containing products are important or very important to their corn weed control programs. Most growers expected to lose between 5 and 20 bu/A of corn yield if they could not use atrazine and spend 4 to 20 \$/A more to control weeds without the use of atrazine. The growers indicated that the mitigation practices that they would most like adopt to reduce atrazine movement to surface water included better attention to setback requirements listed on the label, reducing atrazine use rates by tankmixing with other herbicides, light incorporation of soil-applied atrazine, establishing filter strips around surface water, being careful not to apply just prior to heavy rain, and utilization of herbicide-resistant corn hybrids.