

Briefing Note

Subject: CIBA-GEIGY MEETING ON ATRAZINE - MELBOURNE 16.8.94

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proactive approach that should be taken in relation to outlining the uses of Atrazine.

In attendance were: Herman Mani, Jim Swain, Zoe Hibbert - Ciba-Geigy  
Ross Hills, Stewart Murrhly - North Forest Products  
Brian Priestley - Chemical Safety Evaluation Unit, NH&MRC  
Dr Mark Jacobs - Director of Public Health, Tasmania  
Gerard Brown - The Allen Consulting Group  
Brian Hodgson - Forestry Tasmania

The thrust of the meeting was how to deal with the use of Atrazine as a chemical herbicide. It was recognised that it is part of a bigger issue of anti-chemical use and anti-forestry in Tasmania.

~~There is a wealth of information available on the scientific aspects of the chemical.~~

Discussion hinged around the role of the National Registration Authority and the public review process that is underway for the Review of Existing Registered Chemicals. This is a role that the NRA has under its charter, to systematically review the registration status of all agricultural and veterinary chemicals currently registered in Australia. The process as to how this is to be undertaken is still being investigated.

An additional function for the NRA is an ad-hoc review of any chemical it considers should be reviewed for whatever reason.

Ciba-Geigy is contemplating asking the NRA to undertake such a review. Even if a review of Atrazine was undertaken by NRA under either of the above two mechanisms, and it was cleared, there is no security for the chemical as it could be politically "canned" if there is too much controversy over its use. These reviews are open for public input so anti-chemical people can have "their day in court".

It was resolved that a three point approach should be taken:

1. Ciba to update its product information booklets and distribute widely to appropriate people and organisations. They will approach us later for additional names for a mailing list. After Lorinna, they had a mailing list of about 450.

2. Ciba and NFP to set up a team to liaise with key people - Ministers for Agriculture, Health, Environment, etc - to provide briefings. NH&MRC (Brian Priestley) to be involved. (He would prefer to be reactive to specific requests for information, retain his impartiality and not be proactive).
3. Ciba is floating the idea of approaching NRA and asking for an ad-hoc review of Atrazine. He would like our support of such an approach. Although the NRA is participating in the three year research program into issues of forest use of Atrazine, this does not guarantee we have three years grace in the use of the chemical. Either of the two review processes mentioned above could pre-empt the process.

In the USA, the EPA is under pressure to review Atrazine. The American approach is very closely linked with the legalistic implications of any decision. Atrazine is a big product for Ciba in the USA for sorghum and they want to vigorously defend its use in that country. The parent company in Switzerland is still very anxious about the discrepancies of use rates around the world. Jim Swain floated the idea of bringing some of the executives from Basle out to look at sites in Tasmania so they can get a better appreciation of the differences between forestry and agricultural use of the chemical.

Australia is prone to any overseas issues on Atrazine.

The meeting was very positive, and I believe Ciba-Geigy will be making a positive approach to outline the uses of their product.

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30 August 1994

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*30/8/94*