

**STUDY POINTS TO NEW DIRECTIONS
FOR PESTICIDE REGULATION IN CALIFORNIA**

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SACRAMENTO -- The California Environmental Protection Agency today announced the release of a major study it commissioned last year of the Department of Pesticide Regulation's (DPR) pesticide registration program.

Dr. Charles Benbrook presented his study, entitled "Challenge and Change: A Progressive Approach to Pesticide Regulation in California," to the Department at today's meeting of the Pest Management Advisory Committee.

The PMAC is an advisory group formed a year ago by DPR and the California Department of Food and Agriculture to help find alternative crop protection strategies which can reduce the environmental problems associated with pesticide use. The committee's role is to evaluate alternative pest management strategies and needs, to help find ways to reduce the environmental problems associated with pesticide use.

"Dr. Benbrook has proposed a series of thought-provoking ideas, that reaffirm the initiatives the Department of Pesticide Regulation has taken in the 21 months since Cal/EPA was created. We intend to continue working with the agricultural industry and public interest groups to move toward new, creative, and environmentally sound pest management in California," said James M. Strock, Secretary for Environmental Protection.

"Government must do all it can to identify opportunities to improve programs and policies that have significant effects on the environment or human health," said DPR Director James W. Wells. "At the same time, we must accelerate progress toward safer and more environmentally benign pest control systems. We asked Dr. Benbrook to help us find ways to encourage safer pesticide use, and in doing so, help prevent pollution."

Benbrook was also charged with identifying areas where efficiencies and cost savings can be achieved by eliminating duplications of effort between federal and State pesticide regulatory programs, Wells said.

The study makes 34 major recommendations, some of which have several components. Generally, the recommendations emphasize a reorientation of the Department's regulatory activities toward a risk-driven prioritization theme: getting lower risk products registered more expeditiously, not spending as much time on "lower risk" products, and spending more regulatory effort on higher risk products and activities.

The study's recommendations center around four themes: building on strengths, setting priorities, simplifying the state and federal partnership, and moving toward safer systems of pest control.

In advocating that DPR build on its strengths, Benbrook pointed out several areas in which the Department has excelled.

He noted that "significant progress" has been made in filling data gaps for the 200 most widely used pesticides. He also commended DPR's "authority and capacity to act swiftly," citing DPR's prompt action last spring in implementing interim risk reduction measures for methyl bromide structural fumigations, "just weeks after a new study pointed to unacceptably high risks."

Benbrook also said that "DPR deserves national recognition for its contributions of new methods to characterize, quantify, and reduce pesticide risks faced by applicators and farm workers."

In the pest management arena, he praised the Department's "remarkably effective" rice herbicide program for reducing the pesticide load in the Sacramento River system dramatically. It provides a model for how "regulation can play both a catalytic and constructive role in shaping safer systems of pest control," Benbrook said.

Benbrook's recommendations range from relatively uncomplicated procedural or policy changes whose implementation would be straightforward and rapid, to long-term, complex model initiatives designed to drastically alter the way DPR regulates pesticide use in the context of pest management systems.

"I have asked our technical and scientific staff to thoroughly review the study," said Wells. "Adoption of any recommendations will be done in phases, not only to avoid disruption of ongoing programs, but also to allow us time to gather input from interested parties, including the regulated community and public interest groups.

"I want to focus resources first on procedural changes, and those that involve less complex changes in policy," said Wells.

"Other recommendations involve complicated interactions. Regulations or laws would have to be changed, along with major Department programs, and before that would happen, we would have to gain the support of various DPR stakeholders to support dramatically new programs," said Wells.

"These kind of recommendations will require study by DPR, along with workshops where user and interest groups can be heard. In the end, DPR may decide that, although it agrees with a goal set forth by Dr. Benbrook, alternative means would be a better way of achieving it."

For example, Benbrook recommends creation of a provisional registration option for reduced risk pesticides.

"The implications of this change would require careful discussion within and outside DPR," said Wells. "Among other things, should we decide to implement such a program, we would have to establish safeguards to ensure that the products given provisional registration truly reduce overall risk."

Within a year to 18 months, DPR plans to have held workshops to allow input by individuals and groups. The Department will also make maximum use of the PMAC and Methyl Bromide Research Task Force as forums for evaluating Benbrook's recommendations and developing implementation mechanisms.

Once workshops and public discussion are completed, the Department would develop legislative and regulatory packages, as needed, Wells said.

Benbrook, a Washington, D.C.-based policy analyst, was executive director of the National Academy of Sciences Board on Agriculture from 1984 to 1990. During that period, he oversaw the research for and publication of several influential publications, including *Alternative Agriculture*, *Regulating Pesticides in Food: The Delaney Paradox*, and *Investing in Research: A Proposal to Strengthen the Agricultural, Food, and Environmental System*.

To purchase a copy of the report, send \$10 check payable to "Cashier, Department of Pesticide Regulation," to Cashier, Department of Pesticide Regulation, 1220 N Street, Sacramento 95814, requesting publication #440.

Free copies of the report's executive summary are available from the Department's Pesticide Registration Branch, at the same address, or by telephone request to Rudy Lapurga, (916) 654-1202.

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Attached are Benbrook's conclusions, excerpted from the report's Executive Summary.