Advancing Agriculture

Agricultural crop protection products—herbicides, insecticides and fungicides—are vital to the economical, safe, and efficient production of abundant and affordable supplies of food, fiber, timber and biofuels. Crop protection products, by helping farmers control weeds, insects and plant diseases, grow and guard the world’s food staples, along with many other day to day essentials.

The crop protection industry, comprised of the manufacturers and distributors of these products, is one of the most heavily-regulated industries in the United States. CropLife America (CLA) serves as a collective voice for the industry and welcomes this regulation and oversight as a key part of its commitment to develop and market safe and effective products. The industry works closely with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other federal and state regulatory agencies, from initial research to the final product label with instructions for use.

This pamphlet gives an overview of the rigorous process of research, development, testing and government review and evaluation that leads to the market approval or “registration” of new crop protection products. It is a time-tested and proven process that assures the foods we eat are safe.

For an in-depth look at the development, testing and registration process for these important products, please visit CLA’s website at www.croplifeamerica.org.

The Decision to Develop

The decision to develop insecticides, herbicides and fungicides is carefully based on current and potential crop threats, growing consumer demand for a wide variety of safe and abundant food, and the practical needs of farmers and growers who manage their operations as a part of their local agricultural communities. Farmers appreciate the important partnership they have developed with the crop protection industry and rely on the many technologies and innovations the industry provides to battle new and existing invasive pests and weeds. Through the use of innovative crop protection technology, farmers have been able to fight most invasive insects, weeds and plant diseases, such as thrips, aphids, root flies, pigweed, Iceland and soybean rust, that attack fruits, vegetables, grains and fibers crops.

Millions of dollars and years of research are required before a product is registered by the EPA for sale and use. As part of this intensive process, each product is also carefully studied to ensure human safety, efficacy against pest problems and minimal impact on the environment.

In the case of crop emergencies that arise due to weeds, insects or diseases and require immediate action, the EPA may grant an emergency exemption for the use of pesticides not yet registered for the specific need. Again, after careful evaluation, these exemptions are only granted (1) for the duration of the emergency; (2) for limited geographic areas; and (3) with strict use restrictions.

FROM LAB TO LABEL

INNOVATIONS THAT FEED THE WORLD

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Evaluating the Risks and Benefits

Every day across the nation and around the world, farmers are using crop protection products to guard their growing crops from the effects of weeds, insects and diseases and increase crop yields in order to sustain a growing world population. Even after harvest, insects, rodents and molds can harm grains and produce. Pest control is essential in ensuring farm worker safety. Every pesticide applicator has the responsibility to read and follow the label instructions regarding proper handling and use of the product, potential risks and how to minimize and avoid those risks. Detailed label information may include:

- Where and how to store the product.
- Necessary application and safety equipment.
- How to apply the product and when to apply it.
- Restrictions for use of the product, including the amount of the product to use and when to apply it.
- How to clean and dispose of the product container.

The crop protection industry strongly supports and advocates for regulatory and legislative standards for the protection of pesticide applicators and others who work in crop production. The health and safety of America’s farmers are of critical importance to all, and the information included as part of each crop protection product’s label is essential in ensuring farm worker safety.

The crop protection industry has also been a leader in reducing its environmental impact by developing low-dosage products and comprehensive recycling programs for product containers.