

EPA InSight **POLICY PAPER**

This supplement to EPA InSight contains up to-date policy information from the Administrator/Deputy Administrator to all EPA employees.

FOOD SAFETY - AN URGENT NEED FOR CHANGE • October 1993 • EPA 175-N-93-024✓

Below is the opening statement by **Administrator Carol Browner** to the U.S. Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee (**Senator Edward Kennedy, D-MA, Chairman**); the Health and Environment Subcommittee of the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce (**Representative Henry Waxman, D-CA, Chairman**); and the Department Operations and Nutrition Subcommittee of the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture (**Representative Charlie Stenholm, D-TX, Chairman**)—September 21-22, 1993.

It is an honor to appear before you to present the Administration's view on pesticide use and protecting this country's food supply. I want to particularly thank Senator Kennedy, Congressman Waxman, and Congressman Stenholm for all their leadership on these issues.

I would also like to begin by acknowledging that food safety is not an easy issue. It's an emotional subject—and it should be. The package that we will present represents the efforts of a wide variety of people, including my colleagues, **Deputy Secretary Rominger** from the Department of Agriculture, and **Food and Drug Administration Commissioner David Kessler**. Our goal was to harness the expertise, the urgent concern, the very best science, and our most passionate caring for the benefit of our children and all Americans.

Our proposal is a giant step forward, an opportunity to break the logjam of competing and vested interests to ensure a rigorous standard for food safety that all Americans can rely on to reduce the many health risks posed by pesticides and improve the safety of our food supply, especially for children. The solution that we put forward suggests two substantial changes in two laws. First, to assure a greater degree of safety in the food we eat we must reform the

PL-125
Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. But, the risks of pesticide use extend far beyond the dinner table. We need to protect the farmers, the farm workers, and homeowners who handle pesticides. We need to reduce the dangers of pesticide runoff into our groundwater. And we need to decrease the threat to the plants and animals with which we share our world. For this reason, we must also reform the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, or FIFRA.

Let me describe the major provisions of the proposal.

First, we propose to take special steps to protect children. We have already committed to implementing recommendations made by the National Academy of Sciences in June in the report entitled, "Pesticides in the Diet of Infants and Children." We propose that the law be changed to require the Environmental Protection Agency to make a specific finding of safety for every pesticide used on every food, particularly those eaten in large quantities by infants and children. This will require us to account specifically for the unique diets and susceptibility of children. The National Academy of Sciences also suggested we look at exposure to pesticides in lawn care chemicals, drinking water, and insecticides used in the home. We'll follow this recommendation as well. I feel strongly that these steps are absolutely necessary to ensure a new level of protection for our children.

Second, we propose to establish a uniform, health-based standard that applies to all pesticides, all foods, and all risks to human health. We propose to regulate pesticide residue levels in food to ensure a reasonable certainty of no harm to consumers.

Third, we call for strict new deadlines to ensure that all pesticides comply with the new stan-

3 DAYS ONLY

dard within seven years. Within six months of enactment, EPA will identify all pesticides suspected of being high risk. Within three years, all high-risk pesticides that do not meet the health standard will be off the market. Within seven years, all remaining pesticides that do not meet the strict, health-based standard will be off the market. These deadlines will put the burden squarely on industry to prove that pesticides are safe.

The fourth part of the Administration's proposal is to make good on our June 25th pledge to encourage a dramatic reduction in pesticide use. EPA and the Department of Agriculture will develop, within one year, specific goals for reducing pesticide use by the end of the decade. We will include farmers, environmentalists, and other interested parties in establishing these goals and developing implementation plans.

We are also proposing that, by the year 2000, 75 percent of America's farmland would be using IPM (integrated pest management) methods. We are confident that we can reduce pesticide use and pesticide risk without any decrease in the quality of our produce or the output of our farms.

Let me briefly mention three other provisions in the proposal:

First, under current law, pesticide registrations are good in perpetuity. We propose that pesticide registrations be renewed every 15 years. This requirement will ensure that all pesticides conform to the

latest scientific standards, and it will promote the development of safer alternatives.

Second, we would make the registration of these safer pesticides a top priority.

And third, we would prohibit the export of pesticides that had been banned in the U.S. because of health concerns.

Before I close, I would like to add a personal observation. I come from Florida, where agriculture is a key industry. In carrying out my responsibilities in Florida as the head of that state's environmental agency, I worked very closely with the farming community. It was my experience that farmers wanted to use fewer pesticides to protect public health and that, by working together, we could achieve changes in the farming practices for sustainable agriculture.

I also want to say that it's vitally important to me as the mother of a 5-1/2-year old to have confidence in the food on our dinner table. I'm proud to say that this package offers a higher level of protection than any pesticide package ever presented by any administration. It has been a pleasure to work with Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy and his colleagues and FDA Commissioner Kessler and his colleagues on this very important matter.

Now, the Administration looks forward to working with farmers, consumer advocates, and the Congress to achieve our shared goals, to protect our health, and to safeguard the environment we will pass on to future generations.

NOTE: EPA InSight Policy Papers are available on Email (at the Email menu, type VTX, press Enter, then 2 and Enter, and 4 and Enter).

Beginning November 1993, the Policy Papers will also be available on all EPA LAN systems. Once this happens, we plan to reduce paper distribution significantly.