

# PMAC Communications Working Group

Presentation to the  
Pest Management Advisory Council  
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# Presentation

- PMAC Communications Working Group Mandate
- Context
- Recommendations

# PMAC Working Group Mandate

- ▶ *To provide recommendations through PMAC to the Minister so that PMRA can become a proactive enabler of effective communication and implement a purposeful interaction (tools and vehicles) with Canadians, thereby contributing to an increase in understanding and confidence in the pesticide regulatory system.*

# PMAC Communications Working Group

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- Trish MacQuarrie, Co-Chair
- Glen Sampson, Co-Chair, NS Agricultural College
- Debra Conlon, CropLife
- Shannon Coombs, CCSPA
- Janice Hopkins, PMRA
- Katie Albright, Sierra Club
- Madeline Waring, B.C. MAFA
- Robert Whiting, CCOHS
- Jeff Kisiloski, CAAR

# Context

- ▶ Importance of communicating about risk, as part of risk management
- ▶ Attitudes about pesticides and their use
- ▶ Number and diversity of audiences
- ▶ Change in legislative framework
- ▶ Need for consistent messages among regulators

## Context (cont'd)

- ▶ Critical elements in messages
- ▶ Need for effective spokespeople
- ▶ Importance of plain language
- ▶ Need for partnerships in communicating
- ▶ Importance of measuring success

# Recommendations: critical

- ▶ **Critical:** essential to improving PMRA communications.
  - ◆ PMRA move to a communications culture from an information culture.
  - ◆ PMRA adopt a communications approach that seeks to increase the amount of positive and neutral media coverage.
  - ◆ PMRA make plain language communications a priority.

# Recommendations – critical (cont'd)

- ◆ PMRA give priority to reaching specific audiences, and work with partners to establish a communications network
  - Audiences that PMRA should target directly.
  - Potential members of a communications network
  - Audiences that could be targeted by members of the network



# Recommendations: supporting

## ▶ Supporting

- ◆ PMRA direct its communications to achieving the following six outcomes:
  - Establishment of an effective communications network.
  - Greater understanding and acknowledgement of the regulatory system.
  - Broader public understanding of the risks, benefits, and management (i.e. regulation) of pesticides and modern pest management practices.
  - Key audiences with Increased understanding of the pesticide regulatory system and sustainable use.
  - Acknowledgement of improved communications from health and environmental organizations and other stakeholders.
  - Stakeholders who can easily read and understand documents produced by the PMRA.

# Recommendations – supporting (cont'd)

- ▶ PMRA develop a set of key messages based on the following themes:
  - ◆ Pesticide use, risk and sustainable use
  - ◆ Regulation in Canada and other countries
  - ◆ Collective responsibility for pesticides and public education
  - ◆ Re-evaluation of older pesticides

# Recommendations – supporting (cont'd)

- ▶ PMRA, in communicating the key messages, use examples appropriate to the target audiences, and design product life-cycle examples that demonstrate involvement of regulators as well as industry and pesticide users.
- ▶ PMRA assess and use the most effective products and methods of reaching target audiences.

# Recommendations – supporting (cont'd)

- ▶ PMRA adopt and be guided by the following communications principles:
  - provide open access to information about policies, programs and services.
  - disseminate information in all regions of Canada, using all forms of media that are practical.
  - ensure communications respect the *Charter of Rights* and the *Official Languages Act*.
  - ensure trained knowledgeable staff are available to provide information services to the public, and that services are provided in a timely, courteous, fair and efficient manner.
  - have readily available, knowledgeable spokespeople who can communicate clearly to media and through media to the public.
  - integrate risk communications into its strategic communications planning.
  - use plain language in all communications products,
  - take a proactive approach toward communicating about pesticide issues.

# Recommendations – supporting (cont'd)

- ▶ PMRA adopt a proactive approach to communications.
- ▶ PMRA develop a media strategy, PMRA train and make available expert PMRA spokespeople who can assist in meeting all communications goals, and involve the communications network in communicating about issues.

# Recommendations – supporting (cont'd)

- ▶ PMRA adopt the following evaluation methods:
  - ◆ A yearly report from the communications network regarding network activities and the issues dealt with by the network to determine trends.
  - ◆ A semi-annual analysis of media coverage of pesticides and pesticide regulation.
  - ◆ An annual analytical report on phone calls and inquiries made to PMRA to identify trends in understanding of pesticide regulation issues.
  - ◆ Baseline polling and/or focus groups to show any changes in the understanding of the risks, benefits, and regulation of pesticides.
  - ◆ Regular discussions at PMAC to assess changes in PMRA communications.
  - ◆ A report of the results of a mail-out response card to stakeholders regarding information documents published by PMRA.

# Overall recommendations

- ▶ To enable the PMRA to implement the Working Group recommendations, and to recognize the priority that PMAC has assigned to the issue of communications, the Working Group has two more critical recommendations:
  - ◆ the Minister seek additional resources for the PMRA communications activities, and
  - ◆ the PMRA report to PMAC annually on the implementation of the Working Group's recommendations. The first report should address the Working Group's critical recommendations.

# Questions for PMAC

- ▶ *Does PMAC support the Working Group's recommendations?*
- ▶ *Are any recommendations missing?*