

Joint Review Results in United States and Canada Registering Reduced-Risk Herbicide

Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have simultaneously issued time limited registrations for Distinct[®], a herbicide developed by BASF Corp. for use on field corn. Distinct[®] herbicide, which contains the active ingredients diflufenzopyr and dicamba, is effective against annual broadleaf weeds such as redroot pigweed, lambsquarters, common ragweed, wild buckwheat, lady's thumb and velvetleaf. The product will be sold and used for the first time in both the U. S. and Canada during the 1999 growing season.

Distinct[®] is classed as a reduced-risk chemical pesticide, as it presents lower risks to human health than traditional chemical pesticides. The use pattern for the product, e.g., rates, timing and frequency of application, is parallel in both countries, providing a level playing field that promises greater fairness to growers. A parallel use pattern also allows for harmonized maximum residue limits (MRLs) or tolerances, which are key to avoiding trade irritants.

Based on a review of efficacy data, the U.S. label provides for slightly higher use rates to cover certain weed species such as hemp dogbane, silverleaf nightshade, spotted knapweed, shattercane and broadleaf signal grass. Since these weeds are not considered commercially important in Canada, they are not claimed on the Canadian label. There was a reduction of 33 percent from the original Canadian label proposals for Distinct[®] applied at the spike and early post-emerge stage of the crop. This represents a substantial reduction in potential environmental and human exposure, as well as an opportunity for cost savings to users.

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Only limited quantities of diflufenzopyr are expected to be used during the 1999 crop year. BASF will be carrying out additional studies on soil dissipation as a condition of this temporary registration.

Distinct[®] is the second product registered under the Joint Review Program of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) Technical Working Group on Pesticides. The joint review process involves dividing up the studies to be reviewed, with each country using the individual reviews completed by the other. This streamlines the registration process for reduced risk chemicals and biopesticides. The diflufenzopyr joint review was completed within 11 months of receipt of a complete registration submission package by both countries.

Joint reviews are an important element of the ground-breaking international harmonization of pesticide regulation now under way between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico under NAFTA.

Joint reviews:

- C facilitate the registration of alternative pest control tools by shortening the response time and providing an early-introduction incentive for these safer chemicals;
- C increase the efficiency of the registration process; and
- C provide more equal access to pest management tools.

The joint review process is continuing to evolve and expand. Several other joint- review/work-share submissions are expected over the next year. Joint-review guidelines are available on the PMRA's Internet site at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pmra-arla/qinter2-e.html>.

Currently, joint reviews are confined to reduced-risk chemicals and biopesticides. This constraint is necessary to limit volume in these early stages while the process and procedures are still being refined. The longer-term objective is to make joint reviews a standard operating practice of pesticide registration in North America.