

U.S.: Industry welcomes EPA's decision on HLB-fighting insecticide

The California Citrus Mutual (CCM) is "very pleased" by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) recent decision to deny a petition requesting the agency ban the insecticide chlorpyrifos.

The EPA said that in October 2015 it had proposed to revoke all food residue tolerances for chlorpyrifos, an active ingredient in insecticides, in response to a petition from the Natural Resources Defense Council and Pesticide Action Network North America.

"We believe that sound science should prevail in the regulation of crop protection tools," CCM president Joel Nelsen said.

Nelsen and members of the CCM executive committee met several times with EPA last year to convey the importance of chlorpyrifos in citrus production.

In conjunction with trade associations around the country, they encouraged EPA to evaluate the product and all pesticides with "transparent, science based studies."

"We believe this decision is a step in that direction," Nelsen said.

Citrus growers rely on chlorpyrifos to control serious pests like the Asian citrus psyllid that spreads the deadly HLB or citrus greening disease.

The CCM added the insecticide also had established international standards that allowed growers access to important export markets.

Sheryl Kunickis, director of the Office of Pest Management Policy at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) said this was a "welcome decision grounded in evidence and science".

"It means that this important pest management tool will remain available to growers, helping to ensure an abundant and affordable food supply for this nation and the world," she said.

“This frees American farmers from significant trade disruptions that could have been caused by an unnecessary, unilateral revocation of chlorpyrifos tolerances in the United States.

“It is also great news for consumers, who will continue to have access to a full range of both domestic and imported fruits and vegetables. We thank our colleagues at EPA for their hard work.”

The EPA was under court order to render a decision by March 31, 2017. In a lawsuit brought by the petitioners to compel EPA to issue a final response to their petition, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit had ordered the agency to rule on the petition by the end of this month.

The CCM said the EPA would now focus its attention on updating and revising its human health assessment for chlorpyrifos under the standard procedures of the ongoing registration review process, scheduled for completion by October 2022.

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