Minor Uses of Pesticides

The sustainable production of food crops, especially those of high value and limited production area, is vital for human health and for national economies worldwide. It contributes to agricultural productivity, a varied and nutritional food supply, and global food security. For the growers of speciality crops and for minor uses of pesticides, sustainable production can only be realised by the continued availability of crop protection solutions for weed, pest and disease problems. The goal for all stakeholders in agricultural production is to maintain this availability, in light of the economic, regulatory and market challenges.

What are minor and speciality crops?
What is a minor use?

Defining these terms is essential for the development of programmes to encourage the availability of products and strategies to control weeds, pests and diseases in minor and speciality crops. Definitions vary among countries and regions, and are influenced by local agricultural practices, climate, and patterns of food consumption. The Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has prepared a guidance document to aid member countries in defining minor uses more consistently. It concludes that the definitions should reflect crop production variables; extent of production area for a given crop and pest problem; dietary significance and intake of various foods at a local and regional level; economic return to growers; and economic return to the manufacturers of crop protection products. CropLife International agrees with this guidance for the definitions.

In general, the term “minor crops” includes both food and ornamental crops where the production is less than a certain acreage or tonnage. Minor crops are typically high-value crops such as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, nursery plants and ornamental crops. Although “speciality crop” is sometimes used as a synonym for minor crop, it often refers to a narrower group of minor crops.

The term minor use includes crop protection uses in minor crops, as well as uses in major crops, where a particular weed, pest, or disease problem occurs only in specific limited situations.

What are the issues?

Many if not most countries around the world face problems relating to the availability of pest control solutions for growers of minor and speciality crops and for the control of minor pests and diseases in major crops. These problems are generally country-specific and therefore have been addressed mostly at a relatively local level. The generation of data to obtain and maintain pesticide registrations for minor uses is costly and may not be justified by the economic return to the pesticide manufacturers, unless additional incentives are provided.

Registration review programmes in many countries often exacerbate the problems for minor crops and minor uses, as the high cost of the programmes has led to the loss of many pesticide products and specific use authorisations that form the basis of pest control in these markets.
Government authorities have supported growers of minor and speciality crops through a number of different mechanisms, including dedicated minor use programmes to generate required field residue data on behalf of minor crop growers; incentive schemes for registration applicants; extrapolation schemes to use residue data from crop groups to support minor crops; and various means of allowing ‘off-label’ uses. Some critics regard some incentive schemes as reducing the rigour of the pesticide review process and a means to increase the lifecycle of older pesticides. The crop protection industry itself has concerns about ‘off-label’ schemes that would increase liability for crop damage.

Although the problems of providing solutions for minor uses are predominantly country or regionally based, their impacts are becoming widely recognised as international issues, mainly relating to global trade. Minor and speciality crops are extremely important in international commerce. The increasing number of global and regional initiatives to alleviate the problems mentioned clearly attests to this.

**CropLife International’s position**

CropLife International recognises that minor use issues challenge all stakeholders involved, particularly the regulatory authorities. CropLife International supports initiatives and specific arrangements to facilitate and improve access to crop protection products for minor crops, speciality crops, and other minor uses. The crop protection industry contributes expertise and knowledge to ongoing efforts to increase the availability of crop protection products for these markets.

- CropLife International supports the use of systems, processes and tools that provide transparency and availability of information for all stakeholders, such as –
  - engagement with growers to identify and prioritise weed, pest and disease control solutions for minor crops, speciality crops, and other minor uses; and
  - development and maintenance of appropriate databases containing current product and use authorisations, supporting data, and priorities for weed, pest and disease control solutions.

- CropLife International supports mechanisms that facilitate the registration of minor uses, such as extrapolation of data from similar crops or crop groups and reduced number of field residue trials, so long as the mechanisms are based on the principles of sound science and are within clear guidelines commensurate with the protection of human health and environmental safety.

- CropLife International supports appropriate incentives for pesticide manufacturers to support minor uses, such as reduced administrative fees and expedited reviews of product and use applications. Such economic stimuli can help to increase the availability of new crop protection technologies to growers.

- CropLife International supports a minimum 10-year period of protection for regulatory data supporting all products and uses, and supports granting additional time increments in return for registering minor uses. In addition, consideration should be given to the continued availability of crop protection solutions for minor crops and other minor uses during registration review programmes.

- CropLife International does not support the practice of granting ‘off-label’ uses, ‘supplementary use labels’ or third-party labels for minor uses, unless the individual product uses are supported by the respective registrants. In countries or regions where these practices occur, liability for use of such products should clearly reside with the buyer and user.

To learn more, read our position paper on minor uses or visit our website [www.croplife.org/public/crop_protection](http://www.croplife.org/public/crop_protection)

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