

WSSA Position Statements on Timely Issues

During the past several years, WSSA has become more proactive regarding a number of timely issues that impact either directly or indirectly on weed science and societal affairs. Notable among the activities of WSSA is the preparation of "position statements", which upon approval of the Executive Committee of WSSA are then presented by certain officers and other representatives of WSSA to appropriately targeted audiences with the Congress, USDA, EPA, and/or other agencies and branches of government. These efforts, traditionally highlighted by an annual visit to Washington, DC, have proved to be very beneficial for all parties concerned.

Executive summaries of the five position statements developed for 1991 are published below as a matter of timely interest to all members of WSSA.

September, 1991

The Editor

1. WSSA POSITION STATEMENT ON SUPPORT FOR IR-4 PROJECT

- WSSA recommends increased funding for the IR-4 Program. IR-4, a Federally sponsored agricultural research program, supports the efforts of scientists at state and federal experiment stations and laboratories and cooperates with industry in developing required herbicide performance and residue data for food crops, and efficacy data for non-food uses.
- When the FIFRA re-registration process is completed in 1997, an estimated 30% of currently registered pesticides will not be re-registered. Herbicide use in minor crops will suffer the greatest losses. Many basic manufacturers will not generate the necessary data to support re-registration for fruits, vegetables, ornamentals, strawberries, tree plantations, and other minor uses. Consequently, more projects will be referred to IR-4 whose laboratories are presently working at capacity on new uses. Currently, there is a backlog of 1200 requests for new minor use clearances.
- WSSA recommends continued USDA funding for IR-4 by means of a line item in the CSRS budget through PL 89-106 Special Grant monies and an increase of \$1 million for minor use studies in the USDA-ARS 1992 budget. WSSA also recommends a minimum final budget of \$12 million per year for IR-4.
- In order to obtain industry support for re-registration of specific pesticides for minor crops, a standard mechanism is needed to allow transfer of crop injury and efficacy liability to the growers who request such use.

2. POSITION STATEMENT ON CHANGES IN THE FEDERAL NOXIOUS WEED ACT

The Federal Noxious Weed Act is designed to provide for the control, exclusion, and eradication of noxious weeds and to regulate their movement. It should serve as the first step in preventing the entry and spread of noxious weeds and promoting the eradication of established infestations; however, interpretations of the Act have created problems with enforcement and action alternatives at the federal and state levels.

WSSA recommends the following actions:

- USDA should pursue adequate and stable funding to implement the full range of weed control activities authorized by the Federal Noxious Weed Act.
- Revise and expand the definition of noxious weeds, contained in Section 2(c) of the Act, to include aquatic weed species.
- Establish a Noxious Weed Technical Advisory Group to evaluate candidate species, develop appropriate classification criteria for noxious weeds, and make recommendations essential to implement the Act.
- Grant emergency authority to the APHIS Administrator to prohibit the entry of foreign weeds which meet the definition of a federal noxious weed, but which have not been added formally to the noxious weed list.
- Insert appropriate language into Section 4 of the Act to prohibit the intentional movement of federal noxious weeds across state lines except under permit.

- Outline a weed classification system that categorizes the status of federal noxious weeds.
- Delete the statement in Section 12 of the Act that exempts the regulation of shipments of agricultural and vegetable seeds.

3. POSITION STATEMENT ON FOOD SAFETY

- The Weed Science Society of America (WSSA) strongly believes that the United States food supply, which is one of the most highly regulated and monitored in the world, is also the world's safest food supply. At the same time, the WSSA supports reasonable measures to improve the quality and quantity of our food supply without adversely affecting availability or increasing cost to the consumer.
- Agricultural chemicals, particularly herbicides, are invaluable tools in production agriculture when properly used. Herbicide residues have rarely been detected in raw or processed foods, and when detected have nearly always been below the tolerance levels established by EPA.
- Herbicides play a particularly important role in the concept of reduced tillage, which eliminates or significantly reduces the need for mechanical disturbance of the soil, thereby conserving energy and preventing heavy soil losses through erosion. By limiting weed infestations, herbicides conserve soil moisture and increase crop yields. Further, herbicides improve the quality of the raw agricultural commodity, increase efficiency of mechanical harvesting, and reduce farm machinery accidents by eliminating weed obstructions.
- Accurately assessing the risks to man and the environment and then weighing the risks against the benefits of herbicide use is a most important challenge to Congress and our regulatory agencies. Communicating this process and the results to the American public in language it can understand is the challenge to American agriculture.

4. POSITION STATEMENT ON WATER QUALITY

- Research to protect water quality has a high priority within the WSSA and its affiliated societies.
- Most of the herbicides found in groundwater have been at concentrations much lower than health advisory levels set by EPA.
- It is imperative that weed scientists work closely with the herbicide users, and that these scientists participate in research, extension, and regulatory decisions to protect groundwater. Weed Scientists must have the opportunity to be involved in education of users and the public on herbicide safety.
- WSSA applauds and encourages increased cooperation among EPA, USDA, USGS, SCS, State governments, and industry on water resource protection.
- EPA should continue to set Maximum Contaminant Levels for pesticides and national guidelines for regulations. Maximum Contaminant Levels are needed for each registered pesticide and should be set by EPA as soon as possible. But WSSA agrees with EPA's strategy, that detailed water quality enforcement should be left to individual states.
- WSSA endorses the use of Good Laboratory Practices in water quality sampling and analysis to insure an accurate data base.

5. POSITION STATEMENT ON PESTICIDE EXPORT REFORM

- WSSA recognizes that the responsible use of herbicides plays an essential role in effective weed management in most crop production systems, thereby helping to insure economic crop returns.
- WSSA endorses EPA's judicious regulation of herbicides on the basis of sound scientific evidence.
- WSSA strongly recommends that import and export of experimental and developmental unregistered herbicides continue to be permitted in the U.S. This is critical for the development of new environmentally sound herbicides for the U.S. being synthesized by U.S. companies as well as off-shore companies.