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Groups ask Canada's Health Minister to review harmful pesticides

Oct 15, 2012

TORONTO — Environmental groups are requesting that Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq review the use of 30 pesticide chemicals found in more than 700 registered domestic and agricultural pesticide products because of the risks they pose to Canada's environment or human health.

Ecojustice filed the request for a special review under the *Pest Control Products Act* on behalf of the David Suzuki Foundation and Équiterre. Under the Act, if another Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member country bans a pesticide for health or environmental reasons, any person can require the Minister of Health to initiate a special review. The Minister must then examine the reasons for the ban and decide whether to continue approving the product's use in Canada.

"If a pesticide used on our food is found to be unsafe for use in another country, how can it still be safe for Canadians?" asked Dr. Elaine MacDonald, senior staff scientist at Ecojustice. "Reducing our exposure to pesticides linked to developmental illness or cancer will benefit Canadians and it's the government's duty to preserve a clean and healthy environment."

Several pesticides chemicals, including 2,4-D, Bromoxynil and Linuron and the insecticides Amitraz and Diclorvos, are approved for use in Canada, but have been banned by at least one other country because of health risks such as cancer. Nineteen of the pesticide chemicals in this request have been banned by Europe, while the remaining 11 chemicals were banned in Norway or Switzerland.

"Pesticides are toxic to many forms of life," said Mara Kerry, Director of Science and Policy at the David Suzuki Foundation. "They accumulate in the environment, in our land, air and water, where they can cause damage to birds, fish and humans, especially children."

The herbicide Atrazine, one of the chemicals listed in the request, was banned in Europe in 2004 because of concerns about groundwater contamination. Similar concerns have been raised in Canada, particularly in Ontario and Quebec where Atrazine is one of the most used pesticides. Despite those concerns, Health Canada continues to approve Atrazine's use on corn.

"Health Canada has the opportunity to show Canadians that it's doing everything it can to keep them, and their environment, healthy," said Isabelle Saint-Germain, Deputy executive director at Équiterre. "It's time that Canada did what other nations have already done and protect its citizens and the environment from these dangerous chemicals."

See the attached letter for a full list of the chemicals and the scientific evidence that is the basis of our special review request.

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