

Environmental groups ask for review of pesticides

BY NATALIE STECHYSON, POSTMEDIA NEWS OCTOBER 15, 2012



Two of Canada's major environmental groups are asking the federal government to review the use of 30 pesticide chemicals already banned by other countries that they say pose risks to the environment and to people's health.

Ecojustice, acting on behalf of the David Suzuki Foundation and Equit-erre, revealed Monday that they have filed a request for a special review by Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq on the chemicals, which they say are found in more than 700 registered domestic and agricultural pesticide products.

"There's some very strong evidence to suggest that these substances used in pest control substances are harming humans and wildlife and the environment," said Mara Kerry, director of science and policy at the David Suzuki Foundation.

"I think it's important that Canadians are aware of what is being used out there in the forests and the agricultural lands in this country, and the potential risks."

One of the chemicals in question, Atrazine, is approved in Canada for use on corn, but was banned by the European Union in 2004 due to groundwater contamination concerns, according to the group's request submission. Another, Carbaryl, was banned in Europe five years ago because it's a potential carcinogen for animals, but is still approved by Health Canada in 44 pesticide products used on a range of crops, the groups said.

The request for a review was filed under section 17 the Pest Control Products Act, which allows any person to request a special review "of the registration of a pest control product by making a request to the minister" if that product has been banned for health or environmental reasons by an OECD member country.

There's always new science and evidence to demonstrate how these products are affecting the environment and human health, and it's important that they're reviewed regularly, Kerry said.

"It's time to review them again here in Canada, and bring to light the best evidence," Kerry said.

It's "concerning" that these chemicals have been banned elsewhere but not in Canada, Kerry said.

"The worst are those chemicals that are potentially carcinogenic. It can affect human users - even bystanders, in certain case, with some of the herbicides."

Linuron, another chemical the groups have requested a review on, has been found to induce "malformations in male reproductive organs," according to their submission. It's found in eight pesticide

products approved for agricultural use in Canada, they said, and has been banned in Norway since 2007.

Triluralin, banned in Europe in 2010 due to toxicity to fish and its ability to travel by air, is one of the top selling herbicides in the Prairies, the groups said in their submission.

Aglukkaq, "within a reasonable time after receiving a request," can decide whether or not to initiate a special review, according to section 17 of the Pest Control Products Act.

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