

United States - Canada Regulatory Cooperation Council Initiatives on Pesticides: Aligning Approvals and Tolerances/Maximum Residue Levels

On February 4, 2011, President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced the creation of the United States-Canada Regulatory Cooperation Council (RCC) to increase regulatory transparency and coordination between the two countries. Recognizing the critical importance of our \$1 trillion annual bilateral trade and investment relationship, the RCC was established with a two-year mandate to promote economic growth, job creation, and benefits to our consumers and businesses through increased regulatory transparency and coordination. Canada and the United States intend to eliminate unnecessary burdens on cross-border trade, reduce costs, foster cross-border investment, and promote certainty for the general public and businesses, particularly small- and medium-sized enterprises operating near the border, by coordinating, simplifying, and ensuring where possible the compatibility of regulations.

Given the integrated nature of our economies, greater alignment and better mutual reliance on our regulatory approaches will lead to lower costs for consumers and businesses, create more efficient supply chains, increase trade and investment, generate new export opportunities, and create jobs on both sides of the border. One of the initial areas of focus of the RCC is agricultural production, in particular further alignment of crop protection product approvals and establishment of maximum residue limits (MRLs)/tolerances for major and minor uses of pesticides in both countries.

Under the North American Free Trade Agreement Technical Working Group on Pesticides (TWG), the U.S. EPA Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP) and the Canadian Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) have a long-standing history of exceptional regulatory cooperation in the area of pesticide regulation, and our respective regulatory requirements and approval processes for crop protection products are already highly aligned. However, further convergence could promote greater work-sharing and information-sharing between Canadian and U.S. regulators, facilitating more simultaneous access for producers to the most effective production tools and technologies, while maintaining our high standards for protection of human health and the environment. These regulatory cooperation efforts will also help to align MRLs/tolerances of pesticides, facilitating trade of a wider variety of agricultural commodities, and providing consumers in both countries with more choice and predictability at the grocery store.

As we implement the RCC Action Plan, both OPP and PMRA will continue to incorporate public feedback received through traditional mechanisms such as websites, public meetings, and other public engagement. We will continue to build from the solid foundation of NAFTA TWG work accomplished over the last 20 years, as we look forward to a renewed level of regulatory cooperation that will further advance the objectives of the RCC in the area of agricultural production.