



Ag Chemical Usage Surveys

March 2008

Value of USDA Chemical Usage Surveys

▶ **Concern:** The American Phytopathological Society (APS) Public Policy Board (PPB) learned in late 2007 that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) planned to discontinue the Agricultural Chemicals Usage Surveys (Usage Surveys) conducted by the National Agricultural Statistics Survey (NASS). NASS has stated that it needs \$8.4 million in funding to conduct this survey program.

▶ **Situation:** These NASS Usage Surveys produce estimates of the use of individual pesticide active ingredients by crop and state. A key variable in the Survey reports is an estimate of the percent of acres treated with the active ingredient by state. The NASS usage estimates are regularly employed by all of the groups involved in the pesticide regulatory process, including commodity organizations, agrichemical companies, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and USDA. Further, postharvest use statistics are published to provide data for a chemical use data base on pesticides and other chemicals that are applied to commodities after harvest by storage facilities, processors, packers, and shippers. These data are used as an integral part of assessing risk in regulatory decision making.

Essential pest management practices data are provided by the Usage Survey for analyzing policy and program consequences for producers and consumers. Since 1997, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) information has been collected to measure the use of pesticides and pest management practices of all farms and in all phases of production agriculture. Additionally, a major use of NASS data over the past several years has been to evaluate the impacts of biotech crops on pesticide use amounts. These NASS data provide for comprehensive analyses of farm practices used by growers as alternatives to chemical use.

The Chemical Usage Surveys are relied upon by the USDA Office of Pest Management Policy and the EPA to conduct risk assessments and establish pesticide policy decisions. Typically, individual active ingredients are used on a fraction of the crop acres grown. The NASS survey provides data on actual usage patterns. Without NASS data, the EPA may have to assume that 100 percent of the crop has been treated in future risk assessments. This overestimate of use could result in the loss of crop protection tools for U.S. farmers.

▶ **Proposal:** The APS recommends that the USDA reevaluate the importance of the Chemical Usage Surveys and reallocate the budget to continue to fund this NASS program that is so critical to ensuring that growers continue to have the tools they need for agricultural production.

▶ **Result:** Ensuring that this vital NASS program which provides accurate, timely pesticide and fertilizer use information continues to enable informed decision-making and risk analyses on pest management practices and chemical.

▶ **Contacts:** APS PPB members Beth Carroll (beth.carroll@syngenta.com) and Bill Dolzeal (William.dolzeal@pioneer.com) as well as APS PPB Chair Jacque Fletcher (Jacqueline.fletcher@okstate.edu) and Kellye Eversole (eversole@eversoleassociates.com) are available to answer any additional questions.

