

The viability of this program depends on three aspects - the interest and involvement of the controlling authority, participation at all levels by the local community, and research and extension activities based in the locality.

At the end of the first season of the program its success can be gauged by the facts that the only seed set for the season was that required for research purposes, and that despite the awareness of the local community, no new major outbreaks were recorded.

PAINLESS LEGISLATIVE CONTROL OF APPLICATORS

E.J. O'Brien and D.C. Matthews
Department of Agriculture, Victoria

Legislative control conjures up visions of fees and fines. Education processes similarly bring back memories of an unsympathetic teacher and a dull classroom.

Somewhere between these two extremes lies the pattern of control which must be applied to applicators and the chemicals they use to achieve the desired goals of maximum economic benefit for the whole community and minimum environmental damage.

Fees and fines are a necessary, if unpalatable part of legislation. In the case of fees there is a philosophy that if regulation is required then the people who require the protection of the legislation should pay either directly or indirectly. The fees should be sufficient to cover the costs of administration and inspection.

Fines are, unfortunately, a necessary part of the system and should be of sufficient magnitude, with respect to the breach, to discourage further breaches. Some current legislation has pitifully small fines when the magnitude of the loss that the breach has caused is considered. It has been said that laws are made to keep honest men honest! Past experience suggests that some legislation was introduced for other reasons.

So far we have spoken of the punitive, painful aspects. However, if what follows from here on can be implemented, there is no doubt that the control will be painless. The need for implementation of the fines will not arise and fees will be paid cheerfully (perhaps).

Present legislation deals with sale, with prevention of fraud and with intelligible instructions for use. No particular extension or training experience is needed for this, but, if we embark upon control of use then an understanding of the chemicals and their limitations is required by the people who desire to use them. This involves some formal program covering both theory and practice, the extent of which should be variable depending on the user's needs.

There will be some, such as agricultural pilots, ground spraying contractors and pest control operators, who will need a high level of specialized knowledge. Such training will enable them to use all chemicals available for pest management. Some Government and semi-governmental employees will need this same training.

Others such as farmers doing a spray job for their neighbours also need training but to a different level. Here the control is exercised in two ways, first over the operator and second over the chemicals which he may use.

The control of the operator must be accompanied by a parallel set of controls over the chemicals. The higher the degree of competence and knowledge of the operator the wider the range of chemicals available to him. Embodied in any legislation of who may use what, there will also need to be controls on when and where, particularly with respect to certain groups of chemicals.

The aim is to ensure that those engaged in agricultural production of food and fibre may have access to chemicals necessary for economic production without undue restriction. Chemicals with high hazard to users and others and which generally have specialized uses will be available, but only to be applied by personnel with the necessary specialized knowledge. A licensing system for operators with various classes with respect to chemicals is envisaged.

The implementation of such a program costs money. The question to be answered is whether the community places sufficient value on agriculture, community health and abatement of community nuisance to pay the price, whether positively as increased food costs, etc. or negatively as lower quality of foodstuffs if the restrictions are too severe.