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Pest Management Regulatory Agency Publications Section
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Re: Imidacloprid Re-evaluation

*Response to Proposed Re-evaluation Decision PRVD2016-20
Imidacloprid, 23 November, 2016*

Context of This Response – PMRA Regulation of Neonicotinoid Pesticides

Our comments in response to this re-evaluation proposal are submitted within the context of the PMRA's approach to regulating the neonicotinoid pesticides, specifically the longstanding practice of conditional registrations. We recognize and support the fact that the federal government decided during 2016 to end the practice of granting any new conditional registrations. However, we note that conditional registrations remain in place for most of the neonicotinoid pesticides.

This pesticide chemistry was developed relatively recently to replace an earlier generation of chemicals (the organophosphates, the carbamates, and some organochlorines) that have been banned or restricted because of other serious problems affecting either or both of human health and the integrity of natural systems. It is unfortunate and short-sighted that the pesticide regulatory approval process allowed the replacement of bad chemistry with bad chemistry, including via a risk assessment and risk management exercise that allowed conditional approvals of neonicotinoid pesticides in the absence of studies evaluating their chronic toxicity to pollinators.

We also recognize that the assessment of neonicotinoid impacts on bees and other pollinators is the subject of a separate re-evaluation process. On principle, we do not support the continued use of chemicals that are conditionally registered by the federal government due to the lack of valid studies of chronic toxicity to pollinators.

The Proposed Re-evaluation Decision on Imidacloprid

The results of this current scientific re-evaluation of imidacloprid indicate an even more broad-based concern about this pesticide in terms of diverse impacts to freshwater and marine insect species and ecosystems as well as certain aspects of terrestrial ecosystems. Despite the shortcomings of the regulatory process to date, we are pleased to see the thoroughness of this

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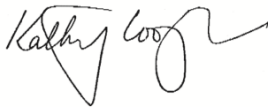
current review and the strength of its conclusion. The findings of environmental impacts summarized in Chapter Four of this report are alarming. The report notes a range of acute and chronic toxicity concerns for freshwater and marine invertebrates as well as toxicity to beneficial terrestrial arthropods. Across this range of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystem effects it is reasonable to expect a cascade of further impacts through the related aquatic and terrestrial food chains.

Not only is it alarming to see such a broad spectrum of environmental impacts, the report begs the question: why were such effects not seen during original risk assessments for imidacloprid, either for the active ingredient or its many additional product formulations?

The report notes that conclusions about likely environmental harm are based on a combination of direct monitoring and modelling. While we support the need for ongoing monitoring of this and many other pesticides, we strongly dispute the position advanced by opponents of regulatory action on imidacloprid that action be delayed until more monitoring data are available. This report summarizes currently available monitoring data. While not entirely conclusive as to impacts, it is reasonable to conclude that a large and uncontrolled experiment has been underway for some time as to the diverse and negative ecosystem effects of this chemical.

We therefore strongly support the PMRA conclusion that continuation of most uses of imidacloprid is not environmentally sustainable. Moreover, the three to five year time horizon for this phase-out seems overly generous and we urge the PMRA to phase-out imidacloprid as soon as possible.

Yours truly,
CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW ASSOCIATION



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About CELA

The Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA) is a public interest organization founded in 1970 to use and improve laws to protect public health and the environment. Funded as a legal aid clinic specializing in environmental law, CELA represents individuals and groups in the courts and before administrative tribunals on a wide variety of environmental and public health matters. CELA staff members are involved in various initiatives related to law reform, public legal education, and community organization. CELA has a long history of work addressing the regulation of toxic substances, including pesticides.