



Submission to Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee.

The Alliance for a Clean Environment (ACE) is an environmental health and justice Non Government Organisation working to promote chemical safety and protection of human health and the environment in WA for the past 20 years.

ACE has represented the community and environment for the past 8 years on the NICNAS Community Engagement Forum and therefore has a deep understanding of the regulation of chemicals in Australia.

ACE appreciates the opportunity to make this submission to the Australian Government for the benefit of civil society and protection of human health and the environment.

The terms of reference state:

The implications of the restriction on the use of Fenthion on Australia's horticultural industry, including:

- a. the roles and responsibilities of relevant departments and agencies of Commonwealth, state and territory governments in relation to the regulation of pesticides and veterinary chemicals;
- b. the short- and long-term impact of the decision on stakeholders;
- c. the effectiveness and sustainability of chemicals other than Fenthion to manage fruit fly;
- d. transition arrangements following the restriction on the use of Fenthion, including Area Wide Management; and
- e. any related matters.

This submission broadly addresses all of the terms of reference.

1. The role and responsibilities of the APVMA.

Vision

To be recognised nationally and internationally as a best practice regulator of pesticides and veterinary medicines that has the respect and confidence of governments, the community, the rural sector, chemical users and the chemicals industry.

Mission

To protect the health and safety of people, animals and crops, the environment, and trade, and support Australian primary industries through evidence-based, effective and efficient regulation of pesticides and veterinary medicines.

To be regarded as a best practice regulator of pesticides that has the confidence and respect of all stakeholders would suggest that international science and associated regulatory decisions in similar OECD nations are acknowledged and adopted in Australia. Clearly however this is not the case when considering the use of Fenthion in Australia.

It is well documented that Fenthion has been restricted for use on food crops in the EU, US, Canada and New Zealand.

The US does not allow use on food drops and states:

“Dietary exposures from eating food crops exposed to fenthion are above the level of concern for the entire U.S. population, including infants and children. However, these uses are being voluntarily cancelled by the registrant, and the Agency will not refine the fenthion dietary exposure analyses. Drinking water is not a significant source of exposure.”

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease registry state - For Fenthion - ***The chronic dietary risk exceeds EPA's level of concern for the general U.S. population and various population subgroups, excluding infants. The most highly exposed subgroup is children 1–6 years at 270% of***

the cPAD consumed.

This is a significant exceedance of the US EPA's chronic dietary risk standards and it is no wonder that the manufacturer voluntarily withdrew its registration.

This of course begs the question as to why Australia would allow the same chemical to be used on food crops in Australia given this evidence based data?

More about the US Fenthion regulatory decisions and toxicity information can be found here :

<http://www.epa.gov/oppsrrd1/REDs/0290ired.pdf>

<http://pmep.cce.cornell.edu/profiles/extoxnet/dienochlor-glyphosate/fenthion-ext.html>

http://www.who.int/whopes/quality/en/Fenthion_eval_spec_Dec2006.pdf

http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/agphome/documents/Pests_Pesticides/Species/Fenthion06.pdf

Fenthion is regarded by the International scientific community as a 'Highly Hazardous Pesticide'

[http://www.panna.org/sites/default/files/PAN_HHP-List_1101\(1\).pdf](http://www.panna.org/sites/default/files/PAN_HHP-List_1101(1).pdf)

UN Chemical experts recommend Fenthion for inclusion on Annex 111 of the Rotterdam Convention.

<http://www.pic.int/TheConvention/Media/PressReleases/UNchemicalexpertsrecommending3pesticides/tabid/3513/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

<http://www.pic.int/TheConvention/ChemicalReviewCommittee/Callforinformation/ProposalforinclusionofSHPF/tabid/3186/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

It is clear that there is sufficient evidence based data available internationally to warn Australia about the unacceptable human health risks from the use of Fenthion particularly for children and babies for the proposed APVMA restriction to be supported.

Given that Fenthion was nominated for review in 1994, the real question is or should be – Why has the APVMA taken nearly 16 years to act on Fenthion in Australia when this evidence has been available since 2001 in the US and at least 2006 in the EU? Why have our children and babies not been afforded the same level of health protection provided to children and babies in the EU and US?

2. Alternatives to Fenthion

It is clear that the APVMA and Federal Agricultural department have been supporting the agricultural industry to move away from Fenthion for a number of years already.

<http://www.planthealthaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/BCA-Fruit-Fly-Strategy-Action-Plan.pdf>

This plan states -

"For outbreaks of endemic or established fruit fly, state governments use a number of approaches as part of a response strategy, including sterile insect technique (SIT). SIT is used for area-wide control of Medfly in Western Australia, and in South Australia for eradication of Qfly and Medfly. "

South Australia contributes funding to sterile Qfly production in New South Wales and to sterile Medfly production in Western Australia (DAFF 2007)."

It is somewhat ironic that WA has been involved in the sterile Medfly production since 2007 and yet a minority group supported by political lobbyists has instigated this inquiry and acts to openly undermine the APVMA's decision to restrict Fenthion use and assist industry with alternatives.

ACE is highly critical of the media campaign and scaremongering being conducted by these groups and politicians in WA and their agenda to dismantle the recent reforms and positive gains made by numerous scientific experts, NGO's and civil society made over several years for the benefit of Australian citizens health, environment and agricultural industry.

Other information about alternatives to control fruit fly can be found here:

1. <http://www.infonet-biovision.org/default/ct/93/pests>
2. <http://www.greenharvest.com.au/PestControlOrganic/Information/FruitFlyControl.html>
3. <http://www.abc.net.au/catalyst/stories/s727059.htm>
4. <http://www.bugsforbugs.com.au/library/fruit-fly-info>

3. Is the use of poisons on our food crops safe, effective and sustainable?

There is growing global concerns amongst the international scientific community, NGO's, experts, industry and civil society that the continued use of pesticides in our food industry poses significant long term health risks to the population especially children and long term adverse impacts on the environment.

<http://www.panap.net/sites/default/files/Poisoning-Our-Future-Children-and-Pesticides.pdf>
<http://kresge.org/sites/default/files/Pesticides-childrens-health.pdf>
<http://www.who.int/ceh/publications/pestpoisoning.pdf>

Given the known hazards and risks associated with the use of Fenthion for children and babies it is unacceptable to allow the continued use of this pesticides on food crops in Australia and especially while effective alternatives exist.

It is highly likely that the continued use of Fenthion will risk Australian trade with those countries that have restricted its use and are participating members of the Rotterdam Convention. This will have significant cost impacts potentially for the Trans Pacific Partnership and similar trade mechanisms Australia is involved in. This will be an embarrassment for Australia.

Finally ACE recommends that based on all the reasons above that the Australian Government supports the APVMA to restrict the use of Fenthion in Australia for the protection of human health, especially children and babies and support industry to move towards safer, non chemical alternatives.

I would be happy to meet with the committee at any time to discuss this submission.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Bremmer
Chair
Alliance for a Clean Environment Inc.