



U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
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EPA Takes Steps to Provide Needed Clarity and Certainty for U.S. Agriculture

WASHINGTON (Dec. 19, 2019) – Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is announcing two important actions that will help the agricultural sector protect crops from pests and weeds. Under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), EPA is approving the use of 10 pesticide products on hemp in time for the 2020 growing season. Nine of these products are biopesticides and one is a conventional pesticide. EPA is also issuing a proposed interim decision on atrazine – a widely used herbicide. Both actions provide regulatory certainty and clarity on how these tools can be used safely while also helping to ensure a strong and vibrant agricultural market.

“With common-sense actions, we are protecting the health of our nation and ensuring that crops such as corn, sorghum, sugar cane and hemp can be protected against a broad spectrum of weeds and pests,” said **EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler**. “Under the Trump Administration, the EPA is committed to providing much needed certainty to farmers and ranchers across the country who rely on crop protection tools to ensure a global supply of products, while driving economic growth in agricultural communities across America.”

“EPA’s actions today help support American farmers’ efforts to grow hemp just in time for the first growing season,” said **U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue**. “No other President has done more to remove strangling regulations and promote American farmers than President Trump. From repealing WOTUS, to implementing year-round E-15, and ensuring 15 billion gallons of ethanol are in the marketplace next year, this Administration continues to put farmers first.”

The first action EPA is announcing is the approval of ten pesticide applications for use on hemp, just in time to be used during the 2020 growing season. EPA wanted to ensure the agency acted on these applications quickly to give growers certainty for next spraying season in 2020 and to make timely purchasing decisions for next year. These approvals were made possible by the 2018 Farm Bill, which removed hemp-derived products from Schedule I status under the Controlled Substances Act.

While EPA oversees pesticide registrations for hemp under FIFRA, other federal agencies are working to streamline their separate regulatory implementation processes for the newly legalized crop. The 2018 Farm Bill directed the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to develop a regulatory oversight program for hemp. USDA has since proposed a rule for state-level hemp

growing/management plans. In addition, the Food and Drug Administration also plays a role in regulating hemp products when they fall under their regulatory authority. EPA is committed to working with our federal partners and helping hemp growers obtain the tools needed to support and increase commercial production. The step the agency is taking today recognizes that innovation in pesticide use is critical to the success of our strong and vibrant agricultural sector.

“We’ve learned a lot about hemp since the establishment of the pilot programs in 2014, and we’re continuing our progress to ensure hemp is treated just like every other legal commodity,” said **Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (KY)**. “By approving several biopesticides for use in hemp cultivation—especially as Kentucky’s hemp farmers prepare for the 2020 growing season—Administrator Wheeler is helping deliver much-needed tools for our farmers. Hemp producers across the country are looking to Kentucky for our expertise and leadership with this exciting crop, and I’m committed to helping our farmers, processors and manufacturers take full advantage of hemp’s potential.”

“I’m pleased to hear of the EPA’s approval of 10 pesticides for use on industrial hemp. Since the Farm Bill was signed into law last year, Kentucky hemp farmers have been asking for safe and effective crop protection agents that meet the demands of the booming hemp industry,” said **Senator Rand Paul (KY)**. “These approvals will allow for the use of 10 different pesticides for the 2020 growing season, which will be of great benefit for Kentucky hemp farmers. We know the value of hemp in Kentucky, and I will continue to fight for and support all efforts to keep this industry moving forward.”

“I applaud the EPA for taking critical steps to move the hemp industry in the right direction,” said **Congressman James Comer (KY-01)**. “This action will benefit farmers in the next immediate growing season, and give them the tools necessary to make their crop and operation even better than before. I am pleased to see our regulatory agencies working in a commonsense way to help our hemp growers succeed.”

“NASDA thanks the EPA for taking the first step to provide crop protection for U.S. hemp farmers. Collaboration will be key as we work to provide a full tool box of solutions, including biopesticides, to the emerging hemp industry,” said **National Association of State Departments of Agriculture CEO Dr. Barbara P. Glenn**.

“Today’s announcement by the United States Environmental Protection Agency is a step in the right direction for the nation’s growing hemp industry,” said **Kentucky Agriculture Commissioner Ryan Quarles**. “It is important our growers have new technologies and tools to better help protect their crops and increase their yields. I wish to thank Administrator Andrew Wheeler and his team for working hard to assist this new and exciting agricultural industry.”

“We are deeply grateful to the EPA for taking critical action to empower U.S. hemp growers by ensuring the development of products that protect crops from weeds and pests,” said **U.S. Hemp Roundtable General Counsel Jonathan Miller**. “Hemp presents an exciting new agricultural commodity, and the EPA’s action will help provide farmers with the tools they need to seize this opportunity.”

The second action EPA is taking today is to propose new, stronger protections to reduce exposure to atrazine – the next step in the registration review process required under FIFRA. Atrazine is a widely used herbicide that controls a variety of grasses and broadleaf weeds. It is well-known and trusted by growers as one of the most effective herbicides. Atrazine is used on about 75 million acres annually and is most often applied to corn, sorghum, and sugarcane. (Note: Atrazine is not one of the ten pesticides approved for hemp.)

As part of this action, the agency is proposing a reduction to the maximum application rate for atrazine used on residential turf, and other updates to the label requirements, including mandatory spray drift control measures. EPA’s proposed decision is based on the 2016 draft ecological risk assessment and the 2018 human health draft risk assessment for atrazine. EPA is also proposing updates to the requirements for propazine and simazine, which are chemically related to atrazine. EPA will be taking comment on the atrazine, propazine and simazine Proposed Interim Decisions for 60 days after publication in the Federal Register. Comments can be made to the following dockets [EPA-HQ-OPP-2013-0266 \(atrazine\)](#), [EPA-HQ-OPP-2013-0250 \(propazine\)](#), and [EPA-HQ-OPP-2013-0251 \(simazine\)](#) once the Federal Register notice publishes online.

“We appreciate the EPA’s proposal to re-register atrazine,” said **Missouri Corn Growers Association CEO and Triazine Network Chair Gary Marshall**. “This product is tremendously important to farmers across the country, especially for weed control in conservation practices. From citrus to sorghum and corn to Christmas trees, farmers rely on the agency’s use of credible science to regulate the products that allow us to safely grow more with less for a hungry global population.”

“National Sorghum Producers appreciates EPA applying sound science and moving forward with this key step in the reregistration process,” said **National Sorghum Producers Chairman Dan Atkisson**.

“The impact atrazine has in weed control and making no-till production possible is as vital today as it was over 50 years ago when the product was brought to market. For over 25 years Kentucky Corn Growers has worked to bring production stewardship education and assistance to Kentucky’s farmers encouraging the safe use of atrazine. We appreciate the years EPA has spent reviewing and ensuring the safety and effectiveness of atrazine,” said **Kentucky Corn Growers Association Executive Director Laura Knoth**.

In addition to today's regulatory actions, EPA is continuing to build and enhance its relationship with the agricultural sector through the agency's Smart Sectors program. Staff and senior leaders, including Region 5 Administrator Cathy Stepp and Region 7 Administrator Jim Gulliford, are meeting today in Lenexa, Kansas with representatives from the renewable fuels industry. The meeting is providing a platform to collaborate with the renewable fuels industry and develop sensible approaches that better protect the environment and public health.

For additional information:

Hemp action: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/pesticide-products-registered-use-hemp>

Atrazine action: <https://www.epa.gov/ingredients-used-pesticide-products/atrazine-background-and-updates>

Smart Sectors: www.epa.gov/smartsectors
