



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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Food Safety
Pesticides
GWS

~~Pesticides~~

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Fax!

DATE: May 21, 1998
TO: Linda Delgado and Keith Pitts
FAX #: 720-5437
FROM: Ken Cook
PAGE(S) TO FOLLOW: 10

Here is the press release and executive summary for the report we are releasing today at the Press Club and with 28 other groups in a couple dozen states.

Phil Tauber, CEO of Kashi, will attend the DC event to announce the company's new program to test its cereals for pesticides, reduce levels far below government standards with the goal of zero OI's and other compounds. He'll be challenging other companies to do the same.

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FOR USE

MAY 21 1998

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Same as it ever was...

The Clinton Administration's
1993 Pesticide
Reduction Policy
in Perspective

Richard Wiles • Kenneth A. Cook • Kert Davies • Christopher Campbell



SATURDAY, JUNE 23, 1962

According to a report to the United States Department of the Interior, the Chinese government has agreed to pay the United States \$100,000 for the right to use the Chinese government's land for the purpose of building a new road.

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from the National Academy of
Legal and Behavioral Sciences for
its role in the Vietnam War.

Until now, there has been no effort among anti-war communists here at all. Otherwise, the anti-war crowd will surely

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VAIB THE WALL STREET JOURNAL MONDAY, JUNE 26, 1995

Group found that many fruits and vegetables it had tested were safe; at several pesticides at once. Study director Richard Wilson said the group's findings argue for reduction in the use of potentially dangerous pesticides.

EPA is grappling with a court decision last year invalidating its policy of permitting the use of chemicals that pose only a negligible risk of causing cancer. And Congress is considering legislation to establish a single risk standard for chemicals rather than the two dif-





ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP

For Immediate Release:
May 21, 1998, 10:00 a.m.

Contact: Ken Cook
Kert Davies
(202) 667-6982

Farm Pesticide Use on Rise

Clinton Administration's "Landmark" 1993 Promise
To Reduce Pesticides & Protect Kids Proves Empty

Contamination of Children's Foods Increased Between 1993 and 1996

WASHINGTON, May 21—Five years after the Clinton Administration promised a bold initiative to reduce pesticide use and make children's health the top priority in federal pesticide regulation, the government has done little or nothing to reduce toxic pesticide use, pesticide residues in food, or pesticide contamination of drinking water, according to a new report by the Environmental Working Group (EWG).

"Nearly every trend in pesticide use and exposure shows that things have gotten worse since 1993," said Kenneth A. Cook, president of EWG and a principal author of the research group's latest report, *Same As It Ever Was...* "Overall, government policy during the Clinton-Gore Administration has strongly favored the interests of pesticide companies over children," Cook said.

In June 1993, the Administration reaped laudatory headlines and praise from environmental and public health groups by announcing "a dramatic shift" in policy, touted by the White House as "a landmark in food safety" and "a watershed in the history of pesticide use." Instead, according to Cook: "Almost nothing has been done by the Administration to reduce pesticide use or lower children's exposure to pesticides." "Children and the rest of the population are no better off today than they were five years ago, and some forms of exposure have increased," he added.

EWG, a nonprofit research organization that has conducted numerous studies of pesticide use and safety, said its analysis of federal agency data, programs and regulations found:

- Pesticide use has increased steadily over the past 5 years and could reach near-record levels by 2000, yet the government still has no plan for use reduction, despite its 1993 pledge. The Administration has removed only one pesticide from the market (to protect farm workers), and in fact has allowed a record number of new pesticides into commerce. Both the Reagan and Bush Administrations took more aggressive action against hazardous pesticides—the Reagan Administration banned 12 pesticides during its tenure in office; the Bush Administration banned 4.

—more—

- Levels of carcinogenic pesticides found in fruits and vegetables heavily consumed by children increased between 1993 and 1996 (latest available data), and levels of neurotoxic and hormone-disrupting pesticides have held steady.
- Water supplies in thousands of communities remain contaminated with pesticides, and a federal plan to regulate the most common contaminant — the cancer-causing weed-killer atrazine — is dead in the water.
- The Administration took five years to propose ill-fated rules to define organic food, which the public then roundly rejected. Under the Clinton USDA proposal, organic food could have included products that were genetically modified, grown with toxic sewage sludge, and then irradiated prior to sale.
- The Administration's "aggressive promotion" of sustainable agriculture amounts to 0.7 percent of the USDA research budget — \$13.3 million out of USDA's \$1.9 billion research and extension budget.

"President Clinton and Vice President Gore said they were going to reduce pesticide use in agriculture, protect children from pesticides in food, take dangerous pesticides off the market, and aggressively promote safer, sustainable farming methods," said EWG analyst Kert Davies, one of the report's authors, "None of that has happened."

The report states that despite the passage of the 1996 Food Quality Protection Act, which gave the Administration powerful new tools to reduce pesticide exposure, there is "no compelling evidence" the government intends to keep its promise, even in dealing with highly toxic organophosphate insecticides that contaminate much of the nation's food supply.

"The Administration is about to decide if it will protect children by taking strong action against organophosphate insecticides," said Cook. "Based on the track record so far, consumers and parents have reason to worry that they will have to do more to protect themselves because the government is unwilling to do its job," said Cook.

Environmental Working Group, a project of the Tides Center, is a nonprofit research organization with offices in Washington, DC and San Francisco. *Same As It Ever Was...* and other EWG reports are available online at www.ewg.org

Same as it ever was...

Executive Summary

"As you know, the Clinton Administration has just announced a dramatic shift in the government's approach to the use of pesticides on food. For the first time ever, the federal government has committed to real reductions in pesticide use."

—EPA Administrator Carol Browner
Speech to the National Press Club
June 30, 1993

On June 25, 1993, the Clinton-Gore Administration made headlines when it announced a bold new national policy to cut pesticide use in agriculture and make the protection of children the paramount consideration in federal pesticide regulation.

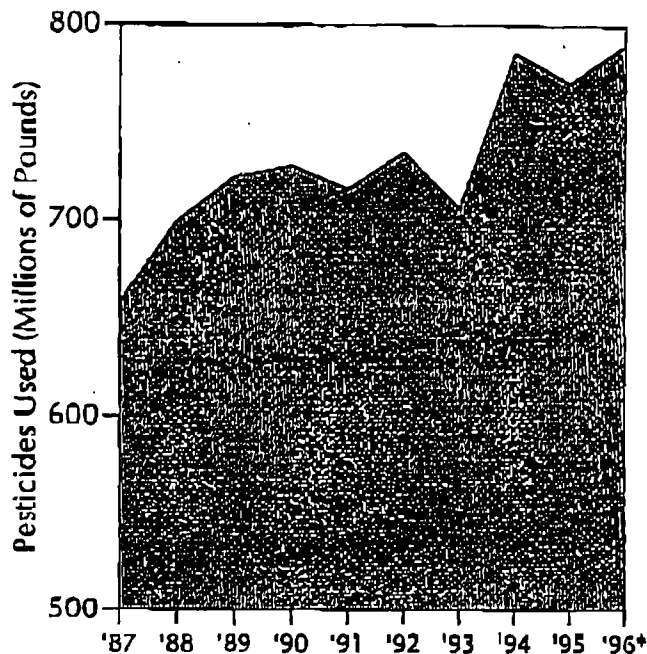
Top Administration officials characterized the new policy as "a watershed in the history of pesticide use," "a landmark in food safety," a "dramatic shift" and "a very significant commitment" on the part of the government to reduce pesticide usage and risks.

This report examines what has happened in the five years since the policy was announced, based on an extensive Environ-

mental Working Group review of federal agency data and actions.

We conclude that the U.S. government has done almost nothing materially to reduce pesticide use or to lower children's exposure to pesticides during the past 5 years. By nearly every measure, children and the rest of the population are no better off today than they were five years ago with respect to the risks posed by pesticide use and exposure. We can find no compelling evidence that the government intends to take, or will take, actions to reduce significantly either pesticide usage or risks before the end of the Clinton-Gore Administration, despite powerful new regulatory tools Congress provided when it unanimously passed the Food Quality Protection Act in July, 1996.

Figure 1. Agricultural pesticide use increased sharply under the Clinton Administration.



* Pesticide usage data for 1996 are estimates based on communications with pesticide industry analysts.

Source: Environmental Working Group. Compiled from EPA 1997, *Pesticide Industry Sales and Usage*. Does not include usage of sulfur or petroleum/oils.

Findings

- **Farmers are using more pesticides, not cutting back.** Pesticide sales skyrocketed after 1993, and pesticide use in agriculture also increased substantially. Farmers sprayed 70 million pounds more pesticide in 1995 than in 1993—a 10 percent jump (Figure 1). Based on current trends, far from being reduced, pesticide use could actually reach record levels during the Clinton-Gore Administration. Belying its headline-making 1993 policy, the Administration never developed any plan to achieve

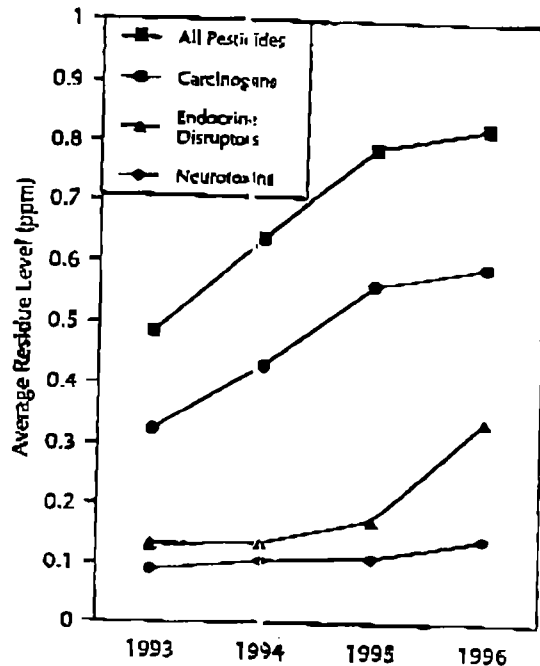
“real reductions”—or *any* reductions—in agricultural pesticide use. Just a month short of the 5-year anniversary of its pesticide reduction policy, the government does not even have a plan to develop a plan to reduce pesticide use overall, or to curb systematically the use of the riskiest pesticides, such as organophosphate insecticides.

- **Children’s exposure to pesticides in food is not reduced.** Foods heavily consumed by children are just as contaminated with pesticides today as they were in 1993 (Figure 2). Analysis of the most recent USDA data (for 1996) shows that 67 pesticides were found in just 12 fruits and vegetables heavily consumed by children, compared to 58 found by USDA in 1993. Although hundreds of pesticide food tolerances have been dropped by manufacturers or revoked by the EPA since 1993, most of these were for little-used products. Analysis of the most recent federal residue monitoring data shows that in 1996, the pesticides found in fruits and vegetables heavily consumed by children were essentially the same as those found in 1993. Worse, levels of cancer-causing pesticides in these important children’s foods appeared to increase significantly between 1993 and

1996. Levels of neurotoxic and hormone-disrupting pesticides remained about the same. Between 1993 and 2000, tens of millions of children between the ages of 0 and 5 will have been exposed to continuing high levels of pesticides in food while the Clinton-Gore Administration studies children's pesticide exposures and risks with no plan in place to reduce them.

- **Water supplies are still contaminated with pesticides.** Weed killers, bug killers and other pesticides still contaminate thousands of water supplies nationwide. For hundreds of Midwestern communities, pesticide runoff to rivers and streams produces tap water commonly contaminated with five or more weed killers during peak runoff each spring and summer. Communities using reservoirs are exposed to these mixtures year-round. Everyone who drinks the water is affected, including millions of babies who consume pesticides when parents feed them infant formula reconstituted with tap water. EPA's "special review" of the pesticide that most commonly contaminates tap water—the carcinogenic weed killer atrazine—has stalled, despite the fact that the chemical now

Figure 2. Levels of pesticides increased on fruits and vegetables heavily consumed by infants and children between 1993 and 1996.



Source: Environmental Working Group. Compiled from USDA AMS Pesticide Data Program 1993-1996 and FDA Pesticide Monitoring Program, 1993-1996. PDP foods include apples, carrots, grapes, green beans, oranges, and peaches. FDA foods include cherries, cucumbers, head lettuce, loose leaf lettuce, pears, peas, tomatoes, strawberries, and sweet peppers. Average residue levels were calculated by averaging the mean residue concentrations in each of the PDP and FDA foods.

contaminates some 1,500 drinking water systems in 20 states, from New York to Hawaii, and has been banned in many European countries. Most efforts to reduce levels of weed killers in tap water have come literally at the end of the pipe: clean up actions by local water suppliers, paid for by their customers.

- **The Administration has taken only one pesticide off the market.** Despite its high-profile 1993 commitment to take the highest-risk pesti-

Because of governmental inaction, the same array of older, more toxic chemicals used in 1993 still predominates on farms in 1998.

cides off the market to reduce risks and make room for "safer" pesticides, in five years the Clinton-Gore Administration has taken just one pesticide, phosdrin, off the market. This action was taken to provide much-needed protection to farmworkers. The benefit to the public at large, and to children, however, has been negligible. In contrast, Ronald Reagan banned 12 pesticides for food use in his 8 years in office, and George Bush banned 4 during his term—including Alar.

The Clinton EPA did sign a phase-out agreement with Dupont company to end use of the weed killer cyanazine by the year 2003. Currently, however, 25 million pounds of this pesticide are used each year and it remains a significant tap water contaminant. Because of governmental inaction, the same array of older, more toxic chemicals used in 1993 still predominates on farms in 1998.

- **The government allowed a record number of new pesticides onto the market.** The net result of pesticide regulatory actions during the Clinton-Gore Administration is that there are actually more pesticides in commerce today than ever before; more than 875 active ingredients were registered for use as of 1997. EPA has approved a

record number of pesticides since 1993—81 in all. Fully half of these newly approved pesticides *did not* meet the EPA's "safer" designation as promised in the 1993 policy statement. Notable among the "non-safer" approvals is the weed-killer acetochlor, a probable human carcinogen that was contaminating tap water throughout the Midwest only two years after EPA approved it in 1993. The Administration of Gov. George Pataki banned acetochlor in New York in 1997. The 40 "safer" pesticides that EPA approved between 1993 and 1995 provided no measurable benefit to human health and the environment because farmers continue to rely on more toxic, outdated compounds that EPA has allowed to remain on the market.

- **The Administration has stymied sustainable agriculture.** It took the Clinton-Gore Administration five full years to propose national standards for organic food, a cornerstone of sustainable agriculture policy. But the proposal that finally emerged was the regulatory equivalent of a near-death experience for the organic industry. In fact, the proposal was so objectionable to organic food producers and consumers that it generated a

record 200,000, mostly negative public comments to the Agriculture Department. Bowing to public pressure, the USDA rejected the use of food irradiation, genetically modified organisms (biotech), and sewage sludge in organic food production.

Even so, final national organic standards may be delayed for another year or more. Administration budgets for sustainable agriculture research and technical assistance related to pesticides have been wholly inadequate, going from \$9 million in 1993 to just \$11 million last year (out of a total budget of \$1.9 billion). The USDA announced in 1994 that one of its primary "sustainable agriculture" goals would be to get 75 percent of U.S. farmland under "integrated pest management" by the year 2000. Just nineteen months short of the deadline, however, the government is unable to describe what it means by its "IPM" goal; how progress toward the goal might be measured; or whether the goal, if achieved, would reduce pesticide use or risks to human health and the environment.

Conclusions

- For all its drama and acclaim, the Clinton-Gore Administration's 1993 pesticide reduction policy achieved nothing of practical significance to protect American children from

pesticides during the past 5 years. Judged against performance indicators that measure the impact of pesticide policy on real people, the 1993 policy did not mark a dramatic shift, watershed, or landmark in pesticide policy or regulation, as the Administration claimed.

- Pesticide use patterns, exposure levels, and policy decisions have continued overwhelmingly to favor the interests of chemical companies over children. Same as it ever was. We can point to no clear indications that these circumstances will change over the next two years.

Recommendations

- Organophosphate insecticides present a crucial, immediate test of the Administration's resolve to make good on its 1993 policy, and make use of the clear and powerful regulatory authority provided by the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996. Organophosphates are neurotoxic insect killers widely used for decades in agriculture, and in gardens, homes, schools and other places. Because they routinely contaminate many foods that children eat daily—including baby foods—and many homes, EPA has put organophos-

Pesticide use patterns, exposure levels, and policy decisions have continued overwhelmingly to favor the interests of chemical companies over children. Same as it ever was.

As a first step in making good on its claim to protect children, the Administration must indicate publicly how it intends to reduce exposure to organophosphate insecticides in accord with Food Quality Protection Act mandates.

phates at the top of the list of pesticides to be regulated under the tough new standards of the FQPA. According to recent EWG estimates, more than 1 million children aged five and under are exposed to unsafe levels of organophosphate insecticides each day. As a first step in making good on its claim to protect children, the Administration must indicate publicly how it intends to reduce exposure to organophosphate insecticides in accord with Food Quality Protection Act mandates.

- As a precautionary measure, parents or anyone else concerned about pesticide exposure must assume that the government of the United States will not act any time soon to reduce the risks of pesticides, even though government scientists publicly and privately state that the risks are excessive. Parents in particular should take steps to reduce children's pesticide exposure through food, water, in the home and at school. Many of these steps are easy and without cost; others, unfortunately, present costs that parents must bear because the government will not act.
- Socially responsible companies should modify their products and services to help consumers reduce pesticide risks in lieu of meaningful government action.
- Food companies in general, and baby food companies in particular, should accelerate and document efforts to reduce pesticide residues in food. The food industry should expand organic food product lines to meet the standards of respected public and private certifiers who at least meet California's organic standards, unless or until the federal government finally develops acceptable national organic standards.
- Garden supply stores and pest control services should voluntarily phase out the sale and use of organophosphate insecticides and other highly toxic pesticides.
- Pesticides that contaminate drinking water sources should be banned, and manufacturers of pesticides, not water customers, should pay for testing and cleanup of pesticides that pollute tap water.
- Consumers concerned about pesticide levels in food or water can express their opinions directly to EPA by calling 1-800-858-7378.