

GUILLOTENE FALLS ON CHLORPYRIFOS

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The final word on chlorpyrifos as an active ingredient in home, home and pest control operator pesticides fell on 14 May 2010 at the hand of the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Minister Tina Joemat-Petterson. Government gazette Regulation No. R375 of 14 May 2010 banned the use of this old active ingredient in agricultural remedies intended for use in homes, garden and premises occupied and used by people. The banning has no effect on chlorpyrifos in the agricultural sector though and farmers may continue to use it according to the label instructions on crops to control pests that the products are registered for. It may still also be used for pest control in stored grain by pest control operators that have the required certification for these purposes.

Chlorpyrifos is an effective insecticide that has been used worldwide for many decades but as time went by the product became increasingly implicated in adverse effects on people. In South Africa this organophosphate insecticide was the norm for many household and garden insecticides for many years. It did its job to the extent that the older folks would use nothing else than chlorpyrifos. Sadly, as with other pesticides, the users were very irresponsible and littered the poison centres with cases of accidental and deliberate poisoning with chlorpyrifos.

The regulation published on 14 May 2010 did not stipulate unambiguously what the intention of the Minister was and AVCASA's office was flooded with calls for clarification. Due to the wording of the regulation it was difficult to ascertain whether the use was banned for pest control operators as well apart from being banned for use by home owners and gardeners.

AVCASA suggested to the Registrar to take a firm stand on chlorpyrifos (in particular chlorpyrifos-ethyl) to ensure that clever devil don't take the gap and continue to use the product under the guise of not being properly informed about its status. Within the foreseeable future AVCASA envisages that all chlorpyrifos products will only be sold by agrochemical agents directly to bona fide farmers and that the chlorpyrifos products intended for use in stored grain pest management will also be sold directly to those PCOps who are qualified to apply such products. The days of these products being available over the counter are numbered.

Chlorpyrifos will also only be available in containers of 1kg or 1 liter or larger quantities and certainly not to the general public or for general use by pest control operators. AVCASA hopes that it will bring an end to the flow of calls to the Griffon Poison Information Centre of people and domestic animal calamities due to the misuse of this product. Dow AgroSciences who was the inventor of chlorpyrifos has already withdrawn the product from the home and home garden market due its adverse effects on people.

The withdrawal of chlorpyrifos from the household and general pest control market is no train smash as there are several other active ingredients that can be applied for the same purposes without the potential

effect on people and domestic animals. Price is no excuse for continuing with a product of this nature and a few bucks more will bring peace the minds of those that have to deal with human poisoning cases on a daily basis.

It is very troublesome to see that despite the withdrawal of chlorpyrifos that some pest control companies are still prepared to take the risk to use the product in premises and sites of human habitation. I am currently investigating a case where a company did a pest control job in a apartment block. The invoice stated that propoxur was applied but it appears as if chlorpyrifos was applied. Such practices fly in the face of the pest control industry's quest for a professional dispensation and taint the entire industry with a very bad image.

Times are changing, the new Consumer Protection Act is in place and the government is watching the industry with hawk eyes. One mistake by one pest control operator can really trigger a very negative response from the regulatory authorities and to take a chance is simply not worthwhile. Big Brother is watching you!!!