

Approval of pesticides in Australia

Pesticides sold in Australia must first pass a rigorous, scientific risk assessment to ensure they are effective and safe

- Crops, forests and plants in the natural environment are under constant attack from a wide range of pests, which cause large losses in quantity and quality.
- Farmers, foresters, gardeners and environment managers use pesticides to control some of these pests when necessary to protect plants and food supplies.
- Government regulation of pesticides is necessary to ensure that they are effective, safe and used correctly.
- Pesticides sold in Australia must be approved and registered by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA).
- The APVMA administers the National Registration Scheme for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals. The Scheme registers and regulates the manufacture and supply of all pesticides and veterinary medicines used in Australia, up to the point of supply. CropLife members support and comply with the Scheme.
- New pesticides must be subjected to a rigorous scientific risk assessment process before they can be approved and registered by the APVMA for sale in Australia.
- Manufacturers of new pesticides provide the APVMA with detailed scientific information about the chemical to allow independent evaluators to decide whether it is effective and safe for people, animals and the environment, and not a trade risk.
- The information includes data on chemistry, manufacture, toxicology, residues, safety, environment and efficacy.
- Other Australian Government agencies also help the APVMA to evaluate agricultural and veterinary chemicals.
- The Office of Chemical Safety (in the Department of Health and Ageing) assesses whether the pesticide is poisonous (toxicology), advises on worker safety and recommends first aid and safety directions.
- The National Drugs and Poisons Schedule Committee (established by the Therapeutic Goods Administration in the Department of Health and Ageing) considers whether the pesticide should be included in a poisons schedule, which means that it must be handled with certain precautions depending on the risk.
- The Department of the Environment and Water Resources advises on whether the pesticide might harm the environment and how to avoid this.
- When the APVMA assesses pesticides, it sets maximum residue limits (MRLs). An MRL is the highest concentration of an agricultural or veterinary chemical residue permitted in food or animal feed, and is set well below the level that would harm health. MRLs are used to monitor the correct use of pesticides.
- The APVMA notifies the public of applications made, the results of its pesticide evaluations and invites public comment before making its decision on whether to approve a pesticide for sale in Australia.
- The APVMA also approves labels for pesticide products. These labels must contain details of the active constituents, how to use the product, first aid and safety directions and directions for the disposal of surplus chemical and containers.
- After retail sale, state and territory governments regulate the use of pesticides.
- The state regulations cover training requirements for users, licensing of commercial pest control operators, residue monitoring and enforcement of safe use.
- The APVMA monitors the ongoing quality and safety of registered pesticide products and reviews the registration of pesticides already in the market-place when potential safety and performance risks have been identified.
- For further information: www.apvma.gov.au