

Letter to the editor | Response to ‘APVMA chemical recall policy changes with a nudge going a long way’

The Weekly Times’ recent editorials (5/7 and 6/7) confirms the complete misunderstanding and misreporting of the regulator’s risk assessments, Australia’s highly regulated agricultural chemical sector and the recall process powers under the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code Act 1994.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority’s (APVMA’s) highly regulated system of registration, compliance and enforcement on crop protection products is equivalent to the regulation of human medicines in Australia. Using terms such as ‘self-regulation’ is entirely false and disingenuous and sounds more like baseless alarmist activist language than a clear independent reporting of facts.

It’s important to note that the voluntary withdrawal and recall process is only able to be used when the APVMA determines there is no risk to the safety of human health and the environment from a product that is outside of its registered specifications. The opinion piece, along with several other articles in The Weekly Times, trying to compare a compulsory recall of a product that has been deemed to be unsafe, such as frozen berries, to a voluntary withdrawal of a product that has been deemed not to pose a risk, is mischievous or concerningly obtuse. A proper comparison would have been the APVMA’s provisions for a compulsory recall which includes provisions such as public notification, direct email notification, immediate cessation of sales, active return from users and a website page – measures above and beyond the process undertaken by the ACCC.

The suggestion that the voluntary withdrawal and recall process is somehow ‘self-regulation’ or a ‘quiet recall’ because it doesn’t include a webpage, undermines the proactive nature of the process that involves hundreds of direct letters notifying the purchasers of the products and the extraordinary effort to have product removed from point of sale.

CropLife continually seeks improvements, both in effectiveness and efficiency of the agchem regulatory system. Newspaper articles that misrepresent the facts on the highly-regulated system that oversees agricultural chemical product registration and compliance does not serve the nation’s farming sector.

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