

Staff Paper #34

Public Participation in the Risk Management Process

Background.

EPA is considering how the public may most effectively participate in the Agency's risk management decision-making processes for pesticide tolerance reassessment (FQPA) and reregistration (FIFRA). The Agency has drafted a proposed pilot process that provides public participation at a critical juncture in development of risk management decisions. The risk management process proposal flows out of the pilot risk assessment process, which the Agency developed to increase transparency and opportunities for stakeholder consultation (see TRAC Staff Paper # 27). The following outlines the proposed opportunities for public participation in the individual chemical and cumulative risk management process.

Proposal.

- a. Individual Chemical Risk Management.** The Agency is proposing that the pilot process for the development and implementation of risk management decisions include opportunities for public participation. Stakeholders have an opportunity to submit their own risk management proposals at any time following the close of the comment period on the preliminary risk assessments. After review of all comments on the preliminary risk assessments and public release of the completed individual risk assessments, EPA would solicit risk management comments for a 60-day period and place all comments and proposals received in the public docket. During the comment period, stakeholders can submit comments and risk management proposals, and stakeholders would have an opportunity to meet with the Agency (all meeting minutes would be placed in the public docket). EPA would consider all comments and publish the final risk management decisions for individual chemicals, and initiate a formal process for public participation under FIFRA and FFDCA..
- b. Cumulative Risk Management.** The Agency is proposing that the cumulative risk management process be conducted in a way that is substantially similar, to the extent practicable, to what is being proposed above for individual chemical risk management. The public would have opportunities at major steps in the process to comment on the results of the cumulative risk assessment and on proposed risk management.

It is important to note that EPA does not intend that risk management activities for individual chemical assessments delay the initiation of the cumulative risk assessment. Rather, risk management for cumulative and individual chemicals are to continue in parallel. This approach is in keeping with the message of TRAC Workgroup 2's consensus statement¹.

Next Steps.

The Agency is interested in receiving comments from the TRAC and other interested stakeholders on the proposed Public Participation in the Risk Management Process.

¹ During the July 27, 1998 TRAC Workgroup 2 meeting, the workgroup drafted the following "consensus statement" that emphasizes their desire that risk assessment, including cumulative, and risk management not occur in a sequential process, rather that they continue in parallel. The Workgroup's consensus statement is as follows:

"Risk assessment on individual chemicals should proceed at the highest level of refinement consistent with available, reliable data. Individual risk mitigation (management) should begin and continue parallel to cumulative assessment and related cumulative risk management. This parallel process should continue until the process for cumulative risk assessment and risk management makes individual risk management activities inappropriate, invalid, or redundant. Nothing in the parallel process should delay moving to and through cumulative risk assessment and risk management."