

Cotton and the APVMA Community Consultative Committee

By Peter Cone, Policy and Legislation Advisor-Technical, Cotton Australia

One of Cotton Australia's Policy and Legislation team's important roles is its representation on a range of government, industry and non government organisation (NGO) committees and boards. As the policy and legislation advisor on technical matters, I represent the cotton industry on a number of these committees, including the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) Community Consultative Committee (CCC).



Peter Cone.

The purpose of the APVMA CCC is to provide a vehicle for effective two-way communication between the national chemical regulator and community representatives concerned about pesticides and veterinary medicines.

Membership of this Committee is composed of individuals representing the Australian Consumers Association, National Farmers' Federation, Australian Workers Union, Public Health Association of Australia, National Toxics Network, Organic Federation of Australia, Total Environment Centre and Farmsafe. A number of senior APVMA officers also attend in an observer/advisory capacity.

The Policy and Legislation team at Cotton Australia has found on numerous occasions that a far more effective method of achieving desirable outcomes on specific issues (especially with governments and NGOs) is to "negotiate" the outcome with the organisation concerned. Member-

ship of the APVMA Community Consultative Committee provides an excellent platform from which to negotiate many of the key pesticide/GMO issues facing the cotton industry. The Committee also provides a very effective conduit for bringing matters to the attention of the board of the APVMA.

What does the APVMA Community Consultative Committee do?

Among other things, the terms of reference of the CCC are to:

- Communicate community views and concerns to the APVMA regarding pesticide and veterinary medicine issues;
- Recommend to the APVMA further work that might be undertaken to resolve issues of community concern relating to the registration of pesticides and veterinary medicines; and,
- Advise on matters referred to the CCC by the APVMA.

In my role on the CCC, I represent the National Farmers' Federation whose membership includes Cotton Australia and most other major rural commodity groups across Australia. As the sole NFF representative on the CCC, there is an excellent opportunity to build relationships with other NFF member/commodity organisations where common issues are able to be negotiated more efficiently and effectively.

Many of the pesticide related issues such as spray drift, minor use pesticide permits, container management and adverse pesticide impacts are of equal concern to these groups and the CCC provides an excellent opportunity for cotton to identify pesticide issues faced by other groups and seek common solutions or approaches to addressing such issues.

In addition to identifying common interest issues, participation on the Committee provides a strong insight into issues which concern other sectors of the community and assists in identifying areas where industries such as cotton can best direct their resources to address any problems, concerns or per-



ceptions which may be worrying other community sectors.

CCC WORK PLAN AND SPECIAL PROJECTS

The APVMA Community Consultative Committee has developed a three year work plan from which it has set annual goals. Currently the work plan deals with a number of issues including:

- Communication with community stakeholders and the APVMA Board;
- Regulatory and policy input into APVMA policies such as spray drift policy; and,
- Interaction with relevant government departments such as the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and their programs including the Productivity, Safety and Integrity Committee (PSIC).

In addition, the CCC has four special projects in place:

- Product containers — which focuses on an increased role in pesticide container management by the APVMA;

- Product labels — aimed at increasing user friendliness and enforceability of pesticide labels;
- Urban and small landholder chemical user education; and,
- Antibiotic resistance — aimed at reducing the use of antibiotics in livestock where there is evidence of resistance to these materials.

The diverse range of Committee members has the potential to raise a broad range of issues as agenda items. Recent examples include liquid fertilisers used as carriers/diluents for pesticides, the use of Roundup herbicide in residential areas, herbicide tolerant GM crops, restricted usage of high risk chemicals and chemical usage mapping.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

The APVMA Community Consultative Committee, as part of its communication strategy, produces a regular e-bulletin which is posted on APVMA's website, www.apvma.gov.au. This e-bulletin outlines the issues addressed at the previous CCC meeting as well as any issues which have arisen as a result of the previous meeting. It has provision for the reader to electronically submit opinions or input into each of the issues as well as provision to obtain further information on the issues discussed.

In order to achieve the most effective outcome from a consultative committee such as the CCC, it is essential to utilise it as much as possible. I strongly encourage any cotton industry members and organisations to discuss relevant issues with me so that I can take them forward to this Committee in order to work towards the best possible outcomes on pesticide issues facing the cotton industry.

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