THE EVOLUTION OF THE CANADIAN PEST MANAGEMENT INDUSTRY SINCE METHYL BROMIDE CONTROLS

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Industry position on Montreal protocol

The Canadian Pest Management Industry understands and supports development of new technologies to reduce, and eventually eliminate the use of methyl bromide. Methyl bromide has been a valuable tool with a long track record of proven effectiveness, ease of application, extensive label uses and nominal adverse effect to treated commodities. Although the manufacturers are working hard to prove that commercially produced sources of methyl bromide do not significantly contribute to the current depletion of ozone, the public has made it known that they will not tolerate ozone depleting substances being used in the production of their food products or within their environment.

Where were we 3 years ago ?

The issue of methyl bromide controls, reduction and quotas first really hit our Industry in 1993. As users, we sat and predicted the end of food plant pest management and massive infestations of food insects. It was our intention to fight government because this was their way of picking on a small industry. We felt government was unjustified in wanting to eliminate our "golden egg" and expected them to pick up the cost of researching the replacement for methyl bromide. We wanted another chemical which was just as good and as cost effective. We were going to fight for methyl bromide and ignore the strong arm tactics that the government was trying to impose.

How have we tried to protect ourselves ?

Once we realized that the public may not support our fight, we decided it might be a good idea to, at least, have input on the way that controls may be implemented. We also wanted to ensure that there was an open door for communication and information transfer with the Federal government. We had never successfully partnered with the government so we were very cautious about exposing too much information. Our fear was that, the information we provided may be used against us. It did not take us long to realize that government was not trying to force rules

onto our industry . In fact, they were using our information to help find solutions to the problem.

Why evolution ?

Our improved government relationship allowed our industry to move quickly towards alternative development. Yes, there is a world without methyl bromide. Many of you can remember products like Chlordane and Ethylene Dibromide. Both of these products had a long history of wide spread usage and were thought to be "irreplaceable". Imagine the new technology development in safer, more effective products that would have been delayed by the extension of the use of those two products alone. There are many thousands of examples of products which have been removed from many hundreds of industries. The industries have always survived and usually within short order wondered why the product ever existed. In Canada, the reality is, methyl bromide is history. There is already a 25 % reduction and quotas individually based on user history. Our survival depends on how fast we can evolve not on whether it is possible.

Why is change positive ?

When we started to look beyond "our industry" into other industries and countries we began to realize that our government was looking at a much larger picture from a global prospective. They were not only interested in protecting the public and the environment, but were ensuring that controls would be phased in by such a manner as to not put our countries export at a competitive disadvantage. In order to meet these objectives within the time limits there needed to be additional expertise and scientific support from all industries who utilized methyl bromide products. From our perspective, we wanted to ensure that we maintained public support for the use and development of many other products. We want to be viewed as being an environmentally conscious industry.

Where are we today ?

Our industry has successfully completed many tests with alternatives. These tests have succeeded through government partnerships or industry initiatives. Some of these tests include the use of low level phosphine / CO2 / heat combinations. This alternative was highly criticised when first investigated, but through several government approved tests, has proven to be the most viable chemical alternative. Much research has also

been completed on building heating (heat sterilization) including the use of supplementary heating to offset the high cost of boiler retrofting.

There have been great improvements in the area of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP'S) and accountability of these practices. Many facilities have been able to greatly reduce the use of methyl bromide and other pesticides through a commitment to sanitation and pest harborage reduction. The theory being, removal of harborage and reduction of food sources can highly stress the insect population and reduce reproduction. I know of several facilities that have been able to succeed to the point of complete elimination of methyl bromide. Two facilities, one in Canada and one in the Mid-Eastern United States have eliminated semi-annual fumigations for over 4 years.

Other areas of reduction include metered gas release over the duration of the fumigation. Also, pre-monitoring for insect activity, setting insect thresholds, performing applications based on the results of insect activity data. We are also seeing improved sealing techniques through pressure testing of fumigated facilities to check for leaks before fumigating. There are many technologies and techniques that are available when many groups start to put their minds towards the future.

Where are we headed for 2001 ?

Our Goal for the rest of the 1990's is to continue our research on alternative techniques and products. One long-term goal is to work on a national training standard to ensure that all pesticide applicators understand more of the factors that attribute to pest presence. Standardizing the level of education across the country will strive towards removal of the reliance on the pesticide to do the work of the applicator. We must learn to perform prescription treatments based on monitoring and data rather than the indiscriminate application of pesticides as a precaution. If our industry does not regulate its own actions, eventually the public will force the government to perform the task.

A personal note

In November 1993, I sat in a room full of people and listened with disbelief to industry leaders yell and argue about how they "couldn't do this" and "they couldn't do that". I believe that the cycle of human nature is resistance, denial, education and

finally acceptance. I am proud to stand in this room today and talk about successes through acceptance.

Success

Success does not happen without a lot of hard work. Success is driven through successful partnerships and the knowledge gained through open dialogue. Our industry's level of involvement and commitment deserves to be commended. We have taken advantage of government initiatives by utilizing our short term reduction options to cushion the impact of research costs for development of long term alternatives. Three years have passed by too quickly. This could have been valuable time lost dwelling on the past . Instead it has been time well invested in the future. If the last three years is any indicator of what we have to look forward to - Then bring on the future !

The future is bright !!

If we choose to look ahead