

Groups File Petition to FDA to Ban Uses of Triclosan

Popular Pesticide Triclosan Found to Carry Numerous Health and Environmental Risks

On July 14, 2009, Beyond Pesticides and Food & Water Watch submitted an amended petition (www.beyondpesticides.org/antibacterial/triclosan.htm) to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requesting that it ban the use of triclosan for non-medical applications on the basis that those uses violate the *Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act*. Strong scientific evidence suggests that pervasive use of triclosan poses imminent threats to human health and the environment.

“Triclosan is not effective for many of its intended benefits and may actually be doing consumers more harm than good,” said Wenonah Hauter, executive director of Food & Water Watch. “Current regulations on triclosan haven’t been updated since 1994 and much of the science used by the FDA to regulate the pesticide dates back to the late 1970s and early 1980s. The agency’s inconsideration of new scientific research on triclosan represents an egregious failure to properly protect the public.”

Regulated by both FDA and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), triclosan is commonly found in hand soaps, toothpastes, deodorants, laundry detergents, fabric softeners, facial tissues, antiseptics, fabrics, toys, and medical devices.

“Triclosan’s growth to a nearly \$1 billion consumer market is indicative of the failure of FDA to regulate unnecessary, ineffective products that are toxic to both people and the environment,” said Jay Feldman, executive director of Beyond Pesticides. “The marketing of triclosan preys on consumer fears regarding bacterial-borne illness, despite the fact that scientific findings show triclosan to be no more effective than soap and water, and may actually cause more harm than good in advancing bacterial resistance.”

Taking Action

After the petition was filed, Beyond Pesticides received a message from a parent in Arlington, VA expressing her gratitude about the petition,



and her desire to get triclosan out of her child’s school. “[The school] requests that parents provide handsoap for the classroom. As best I can tell, most parents are uneducated about anti-bacterial products or believe the marketing. With the prevalence of triclosan products in the marketplace, most of the handsoap provided by parents is anti-bacterial...This year, my goal is to educate and hopefully work for a mechanism that will eventually keep triclosan out of the entire school, to protect all of the children and staff and if I can encourage a system-wide solution that would be great too.”

Beyond Pesticides wants to help you get your school, office and community to stop using triclosan. Contact Beyond Pesticides for assistance at 202-543-5450. For more background information on triclosan and other antibacterial pesticides, visit our Antibacterial program page at www.beyondpesticides.org/antibacterial.

Major Claims of the Petition

The petition seeks to ban the non-medical uses of triclosan stating that the constantly-expanding, pervasive and diverse uses of triclosan pose imminent threat to human health and the environment.

- Studies show triclosan is present in the body (blood, urine and breast milk);
- Triclosan is likely to contribute to antibacterial resistance to antibiotic medications and antibacterial cleansers;
- Triclosan is an endocrine disruptor, affecting reproductive hormones and posing serious threats to organ functions and increasing the risk of breast cancer;
- Accumulation of the pesticide in waterways and soil has been shown to threaten ecosystems and produce hazardous residues in fish and food crops;
- In the environment, triclosan may be transformed into dioxin and chloroform (carcinogens) when exposed to sunlight under certain conditions; and,
- Numerous scientific studies and reports indicate that triclosan is not effective for many of its major intended benefits.