

Trump Administration Bows to Chemical Industry, Increasing Pressure for Local Action

We have entered an era of outsized chemical industry influence over the federal regulatory process. This means we can expect lax or no federal regulation of pesticides that have known adverse effects. As companies mislead the public, regulators, and scientific journals, the disclosures of their behavior are overlooked or deemed “fake news.” This is a period when more responsibility falls to state and local governments to intervene with measures that protect their residents. It is now a time when the public plays a critical role in demanding corporate responsibility to meet standards of public health and environmental protection that are being ignored by the regulators.

EPA Ignores Science

If there was any sense that the Trump Administration would work to protect public health, workers, and the environment from pesticides, the decision to reverse EPA’s proposal to stop remaining agricultural uses of the insecticide chlorpyrifos dashed those hopes in March. That’s when EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt announced that EPA was reversing an EPA decision in 2015 to revoke food residue tolerances of chlorpyrifos, due to the chemical’s neurotoxic impacts, especially brain damage in children exposed. This action would have effectively banned chlorpyrifos from agriculture, after all residential uses were withdrawn from the market in 2000.

The Associated Press reported in July that, “Records show the Trump administration’s top environmental official met briefly with the chief executive of Dow Chemical [Andrew Liveris] shortly before reversing his agency’s push to ban a widely-used pesticide after health studies showed it can harm children’s brains.” Dow is reported to have donated \$1 million to the President’s inauguration. Mr. Liveris showed up in a June newspaper photo of President Trump handing him the pen he used to sign an executive order. Meanwhile, Dow asked the administration to set aside previous findings of federal scientists across multiple agencies that confirm the risks that organophosphate pesticides pose to about 1,800 critically threatened or endangered species. The administration is asking a federal court to delay an Endangered Species Act decision. And, the chemical industry has been given key positions at EPA that oversee pesticides and toxic chemical regulations, including the appointment of Nancy Beck, Ph.D. from the American Chemistry Council. Our piece in this issue on industry influence and the revolving door provides more details.

Corporate Corruption

Meanwhile, the public has learned that sound science is being undermined by the chemical industry with the release of internal Monsanto documents, raising questions about the company’s efforts to hide information about adverse effects of

its popular glyphosate herbicide, Roundup. This follows on the heels of the March 2017 unsealing, by a federal judge, of internal Monsanto documents—the “Monsanto Papers.” The documents raise questionable research practices by the company, inappropriate ties to a top EPA official, and the “ghostwriting” of “independent” research published in a scientific journal. This latest release, more than 700 documents, was disclosed by one of many law firms representing thousands of families who tie exposure to Roundup to non-Hodgkin lymphoma (NHL), a blood cancer, in their family. Lawsuits against Monsanto have been triggered, in part, by the 2015 finding of the World Health Organization’s International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) that glyphosate is “probably carcinogenic to humans.” These findings have been challenged by industry and members of Congress, as IARC scientists fired back with a defense of the scientific integrity of their work.

Facilitating the Transition to Organic

As the debate on the credibility of EPA’s oversight, and chemical industry efforts to undermine sound science escalate with the disclosures cited in this issue of PAY, Beyond Pesticides continues to elevate the transition to organic practices with the publication of our new *Fertilizers Compatible with Organic Landscape Management* list. We have compiled this list to identify sources of inputs that supplement practices essential to supporting soil biology and the natural cycling of nutrients in the management of healthy lawns and parks, landscapes, and gardens. The list complements our list of *Products Compatible with Organic Landscape Management*, which identifies organic compatible insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides.

The Importance of Local Action

Meanwhile, the dire situation of EPA’s dismantling calls for a dramatic increase in corporate accountability in the marketplace. We are seeing an attack on organic emerging, most recently with USDA allowing hydroponic food production to carry the organic seal. This is happening at a time when there is increasing awareness of the need to advance production systems that regenerate the earth, sequester carbon, and protect and enhance biodiversity—while hydroponics meet none of these critical needs. We need to ask those who produce and sell the food we buy whether it is hydroponically grown.

We look forward to collaborating with you and wish you all the best in the new year!



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