SUBMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON THE CONSULTATION DOCUMENT "TOWARDS A THEMATIC STRATEGY ON THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF PESTICIDES." – ADDITIONAL COMMENTS – From Georgina Downs in the UK – 29/11/02.

Specific Sections:-

In this document it states:- *This Communication represents a major step in the preparation of the Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides. The main objectives of the Thematic strategy are:-*

- *to minimise the hazards and risks to health and environment from the use of pesticides*

Comments – The only overall solution to this problem is through the widespread adoption of non-chemical management practices.

Since 1951, there has been regular documented scientific and medical evidence in relation to pesticides causing damaging effects on human health and yet many of these studies have not been accepted by Government scientists. However, on the other side to this, there are only a few vague estimates for pesticide levels in the air (as it is not something that has really been studied) and that is what the acceptance of 25,000 tonnes of poisons used on British farmland every year is based on, for the exposure of millions of people! Is that really "sound science?"
(This is acknowledged on page 13 of the Consultation Document where it states:- *"Potential exposure of bystanders and residents to pesticides via the air might constitute an exposure route, which needs further attention by research and possibly also regulatory measures.")*

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (1974) clearly states that if someone releases dangerous or noxious emissions into the atmosphere, then it has to be "without risk to human health."
Obviously spraying poison all around the area where people live and breathe is definitely not without risk to human health!!

Studies have linked pesticides with cancer, parkinsons, MS, MND, osteoporosis, autism and birth defects. Chemical pollution could also explain why there is a steady increase in so many other illnesses like ME, asthma, eczema and other allergies, especially MCS (Multiple Chemical Sensitivity) which usually follows acute or repeated low-dose exposure to certain chemicals. In the majority of cases that I know of, where people have experienced the effects of pesticide poisoning and subsequent ill-health, which has resulted in the development of MCS, then any synthetic chemical, especially other pesticide formulations, have a direct effect on the body etc.
(Therefore, if scientists accept that some chemicals are sensitising compounds and will result in hypersensitivity to that particular chemical, then why is the more wider issue of sensitivity to a whole range of synthetic chemicals, following repeated exposures to mixtures of pesticides and other chemicals from all possible sources, so hotly debated and dismissed by some scientists and toxicologists?! Considering how difficult it is for someone with MCS to exist in today's "chemical world," then this is definitely an area which needs addressing, as prevention of these conditions, as always, is a far better option than that of cure!)

Therefore, it is clearly not adequate to only assess the risks to public health or to wildlife and the wider environment, of each individual chemical or groups of chemicals. It has to be taken into account the impact from the accumulation of **all** pesticides and other hazardous chemicals that people are subjected to, every day, from a variety of different sources in chemical mixtures and the effects on public health.

I am contacted regularly by people who have had their health and lives destroyed due to chemical poisoning, following pesticide exposures, from a variety of sources, not only from acute exposures, but people who have the effects of chronic accumulative exposures. For example, many other families exposed through living in agricultural areas; farmers poisoned by OP sheep dips; sheep shearers; exposure to grain store workers; crop-sprayers; farm workers; pest controllers and many other people who have experienced chemical poisoning of this nature.

From the research that I have carried out, it is apparent that those who have experienced the effects of pesticide poisoning and related ill-health, have been viewed by the regulatory and approvals system as a minority. They have therefore been ignored, dismissed and in many cases, attempts have been made

to discredit them, by those who seem to want to protect the chemical industry, for whatever reasons they may have?! Again, the main basis for this is to proclaim that there is "no scientific evidence." Well, where is the "scientific evidence" that it is not related to pesticides?

The principle aim of pesticide regulation is supposed to be the protection of human health, therefore this has to be the number one priority and take precedence over any financial/economic or other considerations.

Manufacturers produce products that can harm people. Governments' licence/approve products that can harm people, so when that harm does occur, as there will always be the potential for that harm to occur, then responsibility has to be taken. Governments', their agencies and advisors have a duty to protect public health. This is not happening with the existing Policy on Pesticides.
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- *to improve controls on the use and distribution of pesticides*

Comments - Pesticides particles/droplets cannot be controlled once they have been dispersed into the air!! They are airborne contaminants. No one knows how far these particles travel or where they end up once airborne and studies have shown pesticide particles ending up miles away from where they were originally applied. Therefore, this problem cannot be solved with improved application techniques or operator training in an attempt to reduce visible spraydrift, as this is not a very realistic way to approach the risks inherent in the release of 25,000 tonnes of airborne poisons onto British farmland every year! In "Liability for damage caused by agricultural chemical drift," by Michael T. Olexa, Associate Professor and Agriculture Law Specialist, University of Florida, a ruling in a US court had stated that ***"there is no proof to suggest that it is possible to eliminate the risk of drift by the exercise of reasonable care."***

- *to reduce the levels of harmful active substances, in particular by replacing the most dangerous by safer (including non-chemical) alternatives*

Comments – This should definitely be a priority for the Commission, to use/develop and promote the existence of non-chemical means of pest control (as there are non-toxic alternatives for almost anything). The move away from chemical dependency can only be encouraged and authorised both in Europe and at Member State level. (Please see paper "Why the bystander risk assessment does not equate to real-life exposure scenarios," sent earlier this week).

- *to encourage the use of low-input or pesticide-free crop farming, in particular by raising users' awareness, by promoting codes of good practices and consideration of the possible application of financial instruments*

Comments – The use of pesticide-free farming is an urgent priority for fields that surround human habitation, as the authorised use of pesticides is posing unacceptable risks to health for those who live/work near heavily sprayed fields. Therefore non-chemical means of pest control is the only option for this type of exposure scenario. (Please see paper and video sent earlier this week).

Also, in relation to Codes of Practice, if something is not legally binding then it is not enforceable and this is often seen as a "get out clause" to avoid taking responsibility or accepting liability when problems occur, so it really is not acceptable to have an extrahazardous activity such as the spraying of poisonous chemicals governed only by that of a "highway code" type advisory document! Therefore, at present there is virtually no regulatory control or legal protection for members of the public exposed from the spraying of poisonous chemicals. (Please see paper already sent entitled "Why the bystander risk assessment does not equate to real-life exposure scenarios," for recommendations on legislative requirements for notification and information etc.)

- *to establish a transparent system for reporting and monitoring the progress made in the achievement of the objectives of the strategy including the development of suitable indicators*

Comments – Informing and then consulting the public on risks to health –

Considering the situation my family and I have found ourselves in, I feel very strongly that members of the public have a right to know any information in relation to public health hazards/risks that they could be exposed to. Members of the public have to be able to decide on an issue as important as the protection of their health and therefore public concern in relation to pesticide use cannot continue to be ignored, as everyone has a right to protect their health and that of their family's from harm. Therefore in a democratic society it should definitely not be down to scientists to be deciding what is acceptable for public health.

I think it has become more apparent over the last few years that society does not see it as acceptable for specialist advice to be provided by experts who have links with/are tied to/funded or simply influenced by the industry they may be overseeing in relation to the hazards to human health. Information must not only be impartial, but complete and accurate.

Following on from this point, if someone has information that affects others or has an impact on other people, then that information has to be legally disclosed.

For example, at the present time, in relation to agricultural chemicals, there does not seem to be any legal obligation for farmers to provide information on any of the chemicals they will use/have used on their land, to anyone who will be/has been exposed. This is clearly unacceptable. If someone has been exposed to mixtures of hazardous chemicals, then they have every right to know what they have been exposed to, in view of any possible health effects, whether they be acute or chronic.
I recently discovered that a section in the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act (1974) Part 1, Section 3.3, (in relation to members of the public gaining access to information held by an employer or self-employed person of that which may affect the Health and Safety of others) is actually a part of the Act that, according to HSE, has no power, as no regulations have ever been made under it, even though it has been there since 1974!

On page 7 of the consultation document it states:- *"full implementation and review of the effectiveness of the applicable legal framework in order to ensure a high level of protection"*

Therefore, changes in legislation are required in order to protect public health from the spraying of poisonous chemicals. (Please see paper already sent entitled "Why the bystander risk assessment does not equate to real-life exposure scenarios," for recommendations on legislative requirements for notification and information etc.)

Summary

I think I have highlighted in the paper entitled "Why the bystander risk assessment does not equate to real-life exposure scenarios," and the video "Pesticide Exposures for People in Agricultural Areas," and other documentation already submitted that pesticides pose unacceptable risks to human health and the environment and therefore immediate action is required as members of the public are not being protected from the high level of risk inherent in the spraying of agricultural chemicals.