

# PESTICIDE USE: Addressing the Data Gaps in Maryland

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# We need pesticide use data, here's why

- Professional pesticide applicators, farmers and lawn care companies are already required to maintain pesticide use data for routine business purposes.
- Scientists need this use information for public health and environmental research with a focus on when, where and how much is being used.

# Are Maryland's statewide surveys adequate?

- Until 2014, Md. Dept of Agriculture conducted a voluntary statewide survey approximately every 3 years.
- Low response rates from commercial applicators and farmers make the data statistically unreliable.
- The surveys have not included the temporal and spatial detail researchers say is most critical to their work in protecting public health and the environment.

## In 2013, the Legislature formed the Pesticide Information & Reporting Workgroup

Among their findings, the Workgroup concluded:

- *“...more complete information about where and when pesticides were used, and the extent of pesticides usage is needed. These types of data are needed to better understand environmental and human exposure and health outcomes related to pesticides usage.”*
- The Workgroup also indicated that 80% participation of all users would be needed for a voluntary survey to be scientifically useful and relevant.

## The 2013 Workgroup also led to:

- 2014 legislation that generated additional funding to improve pesticide usage reporting by the Maryland Department of Agriculture.
- The 2014 legislation added a modest \$10 increase to product registration fees and has yielded approximately \$130,000 annually for data collection.
- In the five years since 2014, the additional fee has generated \$650,000 to improve pesticide use reporting in Maryland.

# Status of the Maryland Use Surveys

- Since the 2013 Legislative Workgroup, the only survey conducted was in 2014 with the results released Jan. 2017.
- The survey contained less robust information than the previous 2012 survey.
- The 2014 survey ignored many of workgroup's recommendations.

# Limitations of the 2014 Maryland Use Survey

- The Workgroup recommended that “a representative response from all sectors being surveyed with a goal of an 80% return.” However, the 2014 report had responses from:
  - Only 7% percent of Maryland farms, and
  - Just 15% (2,610 of 17,001) of all commercial pesticide users.

## Current law and practices:

- Requires applicators to maintain records for one year to respond to complaints,
- Requires applicators to submit their annual data upon request.
- Furthermore, most of the major pest control applicators and farmers already keep computerized records.

# Future reports

- Historical survey reports are in paper formats. The public and researchers need the data *in digital format to allow for searching and manipulation.*
- Another voluntary survey in 2021 is being planned. Now is the time to switch to online reporting and computer storage.
- Without mandatory participation a statistically valid report is unlikely, and it would be a waste of time and money.
- Annual reporting would be preferred versus triennial surveys.

# The MDE Community Right to Know System: A Model for MDA

- ✓ Build an online reporting system based on the Community Right to Know (CRTK) reporting system developed and managed by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) for industrial hazardous chemicals.
- ✓ Allows for the retrieval of prior year reports and easy edits for current year submissions.
- ✓ A revenue source already exists - \$130,000 per year for construction and operations.
- ✓ Existing laws already require submission of pesticide use records.

# Justification

- Pesticides are the only hazardous chemical category excluded by the EPA from reporting uses or releases to the environment under CRTK.
- These designed poisonous chemicals are released to the environment in quantities measured in millions of pounds per year per state.
- Reliance on voluntary reporting fails to address statistical concerns expressed by numerous human health and environmental scientists.

We can and should do better

Questions?