



Cutting Edge

RESEARCH NEWS FROM CITRUS RESEARCH INTERNATIONAL

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Carbendazim – Cautionary Notice

This notification is issued as an urgent cautionary notice of currently unfolding developments within the EU that have important consequences for some chemicals used for pest and disease management on citrus.

Vaughan Hattingh (CRI) and Paul Hardman (CGA) undertook a trip (funded jointly by the CGA and SA PIP) to the UK last week. One of the objectives was to investigate concerns regarding the future status of EU MRLs for some chemical treatments of strategic value to the industry. These investigations provided access to a process that was very recently initiated within the EU, wherein the MRLs of several chemicals are being urgently reviewed in light of new information pertaining to methodologies used in establishing residue tolerance levels (MRLs). This urgent EU review process is still in a pre-regulatory phase, and no parties outside of the relevant EU structures have as yet been notified. However, in light of the serious consequences for our industry and the need for urgent action, it is necessary to inform the SA citrus industry.

One of the chemicals under review is carbendazim (Benomyl, Spotless, Bavistin, Bendazid, Knowin, and any other equivalent product that results in a carbendazim residue). Carbendazim is scheduled for widespread application in mid-November for CBS control.

An initial assessment was recently (during the first two weeks of October) reported to the EU Pesticide Residue Committee. The report recommended that the MRL for carbendazim on citrus be revoked. This would mean that residues of carbendazim, as would result from the scheduled mid-November 2005 sprays, would not be permissible, with a high probability of this requirement being implemented and enforced, during the 2006 export season, making such treated fruit unsuitable for export to the EU.

Vaughan Hattingh and Paul Hardman urgently engaged in consultation with the relevant parties in the European Commission on 14 October 2005. As an emergency measure, a data package on carbendazim was put together by CRI and submitted (on behalf of the CGA) to the relevant parties in the EU on 17 October. These data were

considered at a voting of the EU Pesticide Residues Committee on Friday 21 October. A vote on the proposal to revoke the MRL was deferred to 09 December at the latest, to enable more comprehensive evaluation of relevant data.

As the situation currently stands, there is a very high probability that the EU MRL for carbendazim on citrus will be revoked – effective during the next export season. The prospects for averting this outcome are not at all promising in light of the various technical considerations that have given rise to the MRL revision. Consequently, it is necessary to advise all growers, effective immediately, to refrain from spraying carbendazim on citrus destined for export to the EU market in 2006.

In the interim, every effort is being made to expedite a final ruling within the EU and to access all available data that may be of value in attaining a favourable outcome to the process.

For advice on alternative control strategies, growers are invited to contact Tian Schutte 013-7598000 or a member of SASCCON (contact Chris Kellerman 083-2654228).

V Hattingh & P Hardman
17 October 2005