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CORESTA's Agrochemical Advisory Committee (ACAC)

In the ongoing series on the activities of CORESTA's four Study Groups — Smoke Science, Product Technology, Agronomy and Phytopathology, focus is on the Agrochemicals Advisory Committee (ACAC), which gathers scientific data and regulatory information about tobacco agrochemicals.

The widespread use of agrochemicals became commonplace following the Second World War and has contributed significantly to increased yields for many agricultural commodities. Inherently, the use of agrochemicals may leave residues on the farm product, and it is important to have an understanding of what such residues imply and to put any residue values into proper context. Stakeholders in many industries, as well as the consumer at large, are increasingly concerned about agrochemical residues on their products, as well as the use of agrochemicals in general. Historically, there has been limited comprehensive information on these topics available to the tobacco industry.

Origins

In June 1990, the CORESTA Board agreed that the organisation should

have more involvement with agrochemical issues and established the Agrochemical Advisory Committee (ACAC). The original focus of ACAC was to gather existing scientific data and regulatory information about tobacco agrochemicals and provide a mechanism for concerted tobacco industry awareness of (and response to) emerging agrochemical issues.

It was felt that as an advisory committee, ACAC should be small but have good geographic and industrial representation. From the beginning it was agreed that individuals, rather than companies, would be appointed to the Committee. Each member is approved by the Scientific Commission and the CORESTA Board.

ACAC has an ongoing duty to keep the CORESTA Board, Scientific Commission and the membership at large informed of developments in tobacco agrochemical issues. The Chairman of ACAC reports on activities to the Board, the

Scientific Commission at their meetings, and to wider audiences during CORESTA Study Group and Congress Meetings.

Collaborations

The coordinator of the Agrochemical Analysis Sub-Group (a part of the wider Product Technology Study Group) was made an *ex officio* member of the Committee in 1996. This has facilitated a useful two-way relationship between the Sub-Group and ACAC — the Sub-Group provides ACAC with assistance on problems and issues with analytical methods, and ACAC provides the Sub-Group with advice and guidance on areas of work. Historically, the Agrochemical Analysis Sub-Group has been involved in the development of CORESTA Recommended Methods (CRMs) for different individual agrochemical analytes (or groups of ana-

lytes); more recently, however, it has focused primarily on setting up a Proficiency Testing Scheme for agrochemical residues, with the objective of determining if different laboratories can obtain comparable results based on their individual methods.

Because of its broad geographic and industry-wide representation, ACAC is also well-positioned to identify some of the other emerging challenges that have their origins in the crop and to stimulate collaborative work in CORESTA (for example, with the Genetically Modified Tobacco Sub-Group).

Achievements

ACAC strongly supports the concept of Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) in tobacco production, providing information to the CORESTA membership on a number of issues surrounding this subject.

In 1993, ACAC released their first publication, *The Use of Published Guidelines in the Selection, Application and Handling of Agrochemicals in Leaf Tobacco Production*, a basic principle for GAP implementation as it relates to agrochemicals.

The primary objective of the Committee, and arguably the one that has had the greatest impact on the tobacco industry, has been the formulation of Guidance Residue Levels (GRLs). The first GRL concept was published in December 2003 as *CORESTA Guide No. 1* and covered 99 agrochemicals. It was the culmination of much work and debate, and is designed to assist everyone involved with the interpretation of agrochemical residue testing results and the implementation of GAP in tobacco production. The list of GRLs is updated as more information becomes available on existing agrochemicals and new agrochemicals enter the market place, and in response to the ever-evolving changes in regulations affecting agrochemicals. The second edition of *CORESTA Guide No. 1* was released in June 2008 and contained 118 agrochemicals. A third revision is expected soon.

GRLs do not replace requirements to comply with regulations, neither on the use of agrochemicals nor on the required level of residue detection. Furthermore, the exclusion of any particular agrochemical on the list of GRLs



would not mean that its use was unacceptable, as long as the use complies with relevant laws and regulations. Similarly, the inclusion of a particular agrochemical in the list of GRLs does not mean that its use is endorsed or recommended. GRLs are intended to assist in the interpretation and evaluation of agrochemical residue testing results, to serve as an indicator that GAP in tobacco production has been followed, and to address persistent agrochemicals that might be present in the environment. CORESTA does not recommend which agrochemicals may or may not be used, with the exception that no banned agrochemicals (including those categorised as persistent organic pollutants) should be used in tobacco production.

ACAC has always closely monitored tobacco agrochemical residue legislation worldwide. It is a large, constantly changing area in which to re-

main reliably informed. It is also complicated further by inconsistent approval, registration and regulations across the globe, making it particularly difficult for a commodity such as tobacco, in which raw material and product can cross the

boundaries of several countries before reaching the consumer. The latest review of this aspect is currently underway.

Conclusions

As an Advisory Committee, the main objectives of ACAC are to inform the Scientific Commission, and ultimately the wider audience of CORESTA, on agrochemical matters that affect the crop (and therefore its products) and to provide the instruments for the industry to monitor and implement GAP with respect to agrochemical use. Its membership, revised occasionally to reflect changing emphasis and challenges in this sphere, has at its core a small group of dedicated specialists who can effectively represent the global crop situation and the different sectors of the industry alike.

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