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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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INTERIOR SUPPORTS PESTICIDE RESEARCH LEGISLATION

The Department of the Interior has announced support of proposed Federal legislation designed to promote the discovery and development of effective new pesticides which would be free of the hazards accompanying the use of many formulations now available.

In reports submitted at the request of Congress, the Department emphasized the need for expanded research in pesticides and evaluation of such materials, as would be authorized in H. R. 4487 and S. 1251, now before the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries and the Senate Committee on Commerce, respectively.

The Department's response cited the report of the President's Science Advisory Committee on the "Use of Pesticides," which points out the necessity to discover the effect pesticides have "on the food chain of which every animal is part, and to determine possible pathways through which accumulated, and in some cases, magnified pesticide residues can find their way directly or indirectly to wildlife and to man." The Department stressed the desirability of acquainting the public with information acquired through pesticide research.

In letters to the House and Senate committees, the Department said the pending bills would be extremely helpful in extending urgently needed authorities and in providing more definitive guidelines in carrying out the Government's pesticide research program.

"This legislation," the letters said, "is not intended to be an enforcement measure or a means of regulating industry; rather it is designed to disseminate information to the general public and to promote more adequate and efficient research program for the benefit of every one."

Such new legislation would "close the gap" which now exists in pesticide testing programs, the Department wrote.

"Up to the present time," the Department added, "it has been the practice of the chemical industry to test new compounds upon relatively few forms of plant and animal life. These studies have not included tests upon indicator species of wild fishes, birds, mammals and food organisms to ascertain whether the compound poses hazards to such creatures in treated areas.

"The rapid expansion in the use of chemicals in all aspects for present-day living demand the closest cooperation and understanding among the various interested governmental agencies and the chemical industry. Chemicals essential to the health and comfort of the people, the maintenance of a safe and adequate food supply, and the preservation of our natural resources, must be used intelligently and with full consideration of the possible adverse effects upon humans, domestic animals and the Nation's fish and wildlife resources."

To achieve this, the Department said, "there must be continuous communication of plans and ideas between the scientists who point the way and the administrators who interpret new knowledge and place such knowledge in everyday use.

"This Department has long recognized that many situations involving losses to fish and wildlife following the application of insecticides, fungicides, rodenticides, and other pesticides are due to a lack of knowledge concerning ecological relationships and lack of information on the toxic effects of such formulation upon birds, fishes and mammals and food organisms in areas where the pesticides are used. Because of their high toxicity, lack of specificity, stable residual properties, and biological magnification resulting from their tendency to accumulate in food organisms, a number of pesticidal chemicals now used pose unavoidable hazards. These can best be avoided by the discovery, development, and substitution of new materials which are highly specific in their effects and readily broken down in nature."

The proposed Federal bills authorize the construction and operation of necessary facilities, pesticide evaluation programs, and the wide distribution of information discovered as the result of the research programs.

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