

Groups, along with More Than 200,000 Individuals, Call for Ban on Dangerous Pesticide

Continued widespread agricultural use of chlorpyrifos harms children's health

SAN FRANCISCO (April 30, 2015) — The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) received a strong message from labor, community, and environmental health groups as well as more than 200,000 people, calling for a ban on the widely-used neurotoxic pesticide chlorpyrifos that interferes with brain development in fetuses, infants and children.

EPA called for public comments on its recently released human health [risk assessment](#), the result of a legal petition and several lawsuits filed by a coalition of environmental health groups. The assessment reduces protections from chlorpyrifos and relies heavily on modeling created by Dow AgroSciences, the company that manufactures chlorpyrifos. Dow's model, which EPA accepted, relies on ethically questionable studies involving the intentional dosing of humans with chlorpyrifos.

Technical comments were submitted by Earthjustice, Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Pesticide Action Network (PAN), Farmworker Justice, United Farm Workers (UFW), Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN), and California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation. The comments use scientific reports to illustrate the health effects and on-the-ground realities of exposure to chlorpyrifos that farmworkers, their families and communities routinely face.

"Even EPA's own flawed analysis shows that farmworker harms from chlorpyrifos can't be avoided," says Erik Nicholson National Vice President of UFW. "Yet EPA proposes continued use of this hazardous chemical. It's unconscionable."

Fourteen years ago, EPA [banned residential use](#) of chlorpyrifos due to strong scientific evidence of negative effects on children's health. However, agricultural uses were allowed to continue. The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and Pesticide Action Network (PAN) urged the agency [in 2007](#) to ban to all remaining uses because of the growing evidence of the detrimental impacts to children and communities when pesticide drifts from farm fields onto neighboring homes, schools and playgrounds.

"The scientific evidence that chlorpyrifos harms children at very low levels of exposure is overwhelming. It is time for EPA to ban this neurotoxic pesticide," said Earthjustice attorney Patti Goldman, who represented the groups in legal actions related to the petition. "EPA has finally acknowledged that chlorpyrifos is related to developmental impairments like reduced IQ and attention deficit disorder, and it is time to get farmworkers, their families and communities out of harm's way."

Though banned for home uses because of dangers to children, chlorpyrifos is still heavily used on fruit and nut orchards, soybeans, and corn, with an estimated [8 million pounds applied in the U.S.](#) annually.

EPA has long ignored children's exposure to pesticide drift and has failed to act on peer-reviewed scientific studies showing brain impairments to children exposed to chlorpyrifos.

"The science on health impacts of this chemical just keeps getting stronger—and overwhelmingly supports the need for a phase out," said Margaret Reeves, Ph.D., senior scientist at PAN. "In addition to many on-the-ground cases, there are numerous independent, peer-reviewed studies documenting risks to agricultural communities. Yet EPA continues to underestimate these risks and has once again failed to protect children's health."

Young children and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to the pesticide because of the susceptibility of developing bodies and brains, and chemicals that interfere with the nervous system during development may cause long-term or permanent damage. Children in agricultural communities face the greatest risks. All children may consume pesticide residues on food and in drinking water, but rural and farm children may be further exposed to pesticides drifting from treated fields into the places they live, learn and play. Family members who work on farms may carry pesticide residues into homes on their clothes and shoes at the end of the day.

“EPA found that low-dose chlorpyrifos exposures are associated with learning and behavioral impairments in kids in real-world studies,” said Jennifer Sass, Ph.D., senior scientist with NRDC. “Children deserve the chance to grow up free of the influence of this toxic and unnecessary chemical—EPA should move swiftly to ban it and protect the next generation.”

More than 200,000 public petitions were collected by Earthjustice, Friends of the Earth, Pesticide Action Network, United Farm Workers, Farmworker Justice, and NRDC. More than 75 public interest organizations and [20 health professionals](#) also submitted separate letters calling on EPA to follow the science and ban the chemical.