

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

For Release Thursday, January 29, 1970

FEDERAL DEPARTMENTS ANNOUNCE NEW PESTICIDE COORDINATION ACTIONS

Secretary of Agriculture Clifford M. Hardin, Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel, and Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Robert H. Finch today announced they have signed a new interagency agreement designed to strengthen the Federal Government's capability in the review and registration of pesticides.

The agreement supersedes the original 3-way pact on coordination of pesticide registration activities in existence since May 1964.

In announcing the new agreement, the three Secretaries stressed that "the pact emphasizes the Administration's commitment to improve the quality of our environment and to accord paramount consideration to the public interest."

At the same time, Secretary of Agriculture Hardin, as chairman of the Pesticide subcommittee of the Cabinet Committee on Environmental Quality, announced a further move to improve coordination of Federal policy and programs in the pesticides area.

He said that his subcommittee is establishing a Working Group to succeed the Federal Committee on Pest Control. A newly-adopted charter authorizes the Working Group to provide day-to-day coordination of Federal agency pesticide activities -- including actual pest control operations, research, regulation, monitoring, and education -- and develop program and policy proposals for consideration of the Pesticides subcommittee.

The membership will include representatives of the Departments of Agriculture, HEW, Interior, Defense, Transportation and State, with observers from the Office of Science and Technology, the Bureau of the Budget, and the Office of Intergovernmental Relations. The charter for the Working Group encompasses a broad area of interagency coordination and concern in addition to the arrangement among Agriculture, Interior, and HEW which is limited to registration of pesticide products.

The agreement on pesticide registrations strengthens the role of the Departments of Interior and HEW in the review of registration applications, while recognizing the statutory authority of the Agriculture Department for all final decisions on these applications. The document defines the responsibilities of HEW for evaluating pesticide products for human health implications, and Interior for effects on water quality, fish, wildlife, and the environment.

New and expanded procedures are also set forth for the resolution of differences that may arise among the three Departments over registration proposals. These procedures provide for submission of objections in writing and, in the event of continued disagreement, establishment of a Registration Review Panel composed of two representatives from each of the three Departments. If the panel cannot resolve the issue, then the question can be referred to the Cabinet Committee on Environmental Quality at the request of the Secretary of the objecting Department.

Based on the Cabinet-level consideration of the issue, the Secretary of Agriculture will then make the final decision on the pesticide registration application or proposed change in an existing registration.

X X X