

**Australian Government Productivity Commission
Chemicals and Plastics Regulation - Draft Research Report**

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chemicalsandplastics@pc.gov.au

Growcom is pleased to receive the Commission's draft report on chemicals and plastics regulation, and to provide further input before the final report is published in July 2008.

As we mentioned in our initial submission to the Commission, Growcom is supportive of commonality and harmonisation of chemical control of use legislation between the states and territories.

We therefore welcome the Commission's proposal for a four-tiered model of good practice governance for chemicals and plastics regulation, which should allow all governments to accommodate their individual circumstances while delivering uniformity and simplicity to our growers.

We remain concerned however, that the following issues are accommodated within the proposed new structure:

- Benefits of FMS programs.
For many years Growcom has been involved in the development of Farm Management Systems (FMS) for Queensland horticultural enterprises. This program emphasises the benefits of a structured, best-practice on-farm resource management system, including the use and storage of pesticides and other chemicals. In this way many horticultural enterprises are self-regulating in their handling and storage of chemicals.

We suggest that consideration should be given to a national approach to FMS when the proposed new body is setting risk management standards.

- Chemical review and registration process.
The complex regulatory environment surrounding chemicals can have many impacts, particularly when taking into account that access to and the use of chemicals is essential for the viability of every horticulture business. Therefore the timeliness of chemical registrations is a critical issue for the industry. Sections of the current APVMA responsible for issuing permits are under-resourced, and unable to turn around applications within reasonable timeframes.

The resulting uncertainty around the chemical review process can mean that an operator could be required to invest a substantial amount of money prior to knowing the final outcomes. Because of the real commercial risk associated with these reviews, it is crucial that the implications of a chemical review are communicated to all stakeholders

in plain English during the entire review, and that the process itself recognises the commercial imperatives for horticultural enterprises.

We would therefore suggest that the new proposed independent authority for hazard and risk assessment take these issues into consideration.

- Security Sensitive Ammonium Nitrate (SSAN).
Past experiences have demonstrated that controlling security sensitive chemicals can have long term and unintentional consequences on the viability of industry. In particular, the onerous and lengthy certification processes required of suppliers, simply led these chemicals being entirely unavailable to growers.

In addition, access to permitted and minor use chemicals (including in biosecurity emergencies) is significantly important to horticulture producers, and these constraints reduce producers' ability to legally access and use these chemicals.

We would therefore hope that the new proposed hazard and risk assessment authority take these issues into consideration.

- Maximum Residue levels (MRL).
Whenever a new pesticide is gazetted by the APVMA, there is a time-lag before recognition by FSANZ - sometimes up to 15 months!

We would ask the proposed new risk management standards authority to consider the introduction of temporary or interim uniform MRLs to overcome this situation.

- *drumMuster*.
This program collects and recycles chemical containers, however there are emerging issues over the management and expenditure of the levies collected by the program.
We would therefore request the proposed new ministerial council to examine the financial structure of *drumMuster* in order to protect the integrity and sustainability of the program.

Please contact my office for further information or advice on this submission.



Jan Davis
Chief Executive Officer