



POSITION STATEMENT

Pesticide Use on Lawns & Landscapes and the Precautionary Principal

The Professional Lawn Care Network (PLANET) supports the use of pesticides registered by the U.S. Department of Environmental Protection (EPA). The EPA's rigorous testing provides users with scientific data on environmental and human exposure risks associated with products meant to enhance America's landscape. EPA registration of a pesticide is a determination of acceptable risk when these products are used according to label directions.

Over the past several years, the "precautionary principle" and "cosmetic, aesthetic or nonessential pesticide use" have become an important health and environmental regulatory issue for residential pest management at the local, state, and provincial levels.

The first definition of the precautionary principal that received attention was the 1992 Rio Declaration version:

Principle 15 of the Declaration states that: *"in order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation."*

Many anti-pesticide groups wish to discontinue the use of pesticides on residential properties. They are using Principle 15 in an attempt to establish their position that current federal and state laws and regulations are inadequate. They are making the case and have convinced some state legislators and county officials that residential pesticide use takes place only for cosmetic purposes, and thus, should be banned.

This position establishes first what EPA's position is on the precautionary principle and how U.S. law and EPA regulations protect the public's health and our environment.

Precaution as Part of Science-Based Approach

The U.S. has never adopted the so-called "precautionary principle" as a formal policy and has no single agreed-upon formulation or principle of precaution to be followed in regulation.

The EPA states that U.S. health and environmental regulations' foundation is made up of 1) the health or environmental standard that Congress mandates, and 2) a process based on sound science that determines the level of protection that meets the standard. The standard mandated by the law is central to our risk management process because it must be met by regulators. In the case of pesticide law, for

virtually all of the food-use pesticides, the standard is solely health oriented and based on “reasonable certainty of no harm.” Said another way, EPA standard requires a “reasonable certainty” that pesticide residues in the diet will cause no harm to human health — a standard that reflects a robust approach to precaution. For nonfood-use pesticides, the goal is the “risk/benefit balancing” standard of “no unreasonable adverse effects.”

EPA further states, because of Food Quality Protection Act, risk assessments now are able to deal with hazards from pesticides in a much more comprehensive and targeted way, one that protects public health (including sensitive individuals) and that is based on sound science. EPA has taken a precautionary approach in dealing with pesticide risk. Yet that approach has been interpreted in the context of an entire process that has a set goal — or standard — that is based on sound science and framed by safeguards, such as transparency, public participation, and judicial review.

The lawn and landscape care industry uses pesticides to help limit the damage that can be caused by insects, weeds, and plant diseases. Insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides are used very selectively to protect the health of lawns, trees, and other living plants in the urban-suburban environment. Fertilizers are used to provide much needed nutrition for landscape plants.

It is very important to note that pesticides and fertilizers are not used primarily for aesthetic reasons. First and foremost, they are tools that help ensure a healthy landscape. Furthermore, their use helps protect customer’s properties as valuable, ecologically important areas. Residential landscapes are tremendous economic assets as well as vital green spaces that enhance our communities’ beauty and overall healthy state.

The industry employs hundreds of thousands of people, supporting local economies through tax revenues and providing many ecological benefits as the result of their work. For example, healthy, properly maintained turf positively impacts the quality of our lives and our environment in ways that almost nothing else can. A dense turf area prevents soil erosion, cools and cleans the air, filters surface water and returns it to the water table, cushions falls and prevents injury, reduces noise, and adds value to our homes, in addition to just being pleasing to the eye.

Deciding When To Apply Pesticide

Pest problems are often relatively predictable or can be diagnosed as part of an ongoing monitoring program. Once the problem has been identified, the lawn or landscape professional considers the available options. These could include cultural practices (suggesting the customer change irrigation or mowing practices) or the use of biological controls or chemical products. Once the problem is diagnosed and the right treatment has been selected, the lawn or landscape professional can decide the ideal time to treat the problem in the most effective, environmentally sound manner available. It also only makes good sense to limit applications of costly products. This approach is often called "integrated pest management."

What kinds of products are used? Most people are surprised to learn that most pesticide products used by lawn and landscape professionals are identical to, or closely related to, those used by homeowners.

Training and Education

The public is often surprised to learn that many lawn and landscape professionals hold college degrees in agronomy, horticulture, or a related field. Because it's important to keep up to date with new

information and technologies, the majority also attends continuing education programs offered by universities and associations like PLANET.

Lawn and landscape professionals are widely considered to be among the best-educated and most judicious users of pesticide products. The vast majority of lawn and landscape professionals are using integrated pest management practices to ensure that both the turf and the environment stay healthy. Applicators also are trained and licensed by their states, which helps to confirm a high degree of compliance and concern about safe, proper use of chemical tools.

PLANET wants to educate customers, legislators, the media, and communities about the environmental importance of lawns and the landscape and explain why the care of lawns and landscape, including the control of pests with products regulated through the EPA registration process with adequate precautions, has more than cosmetic value.