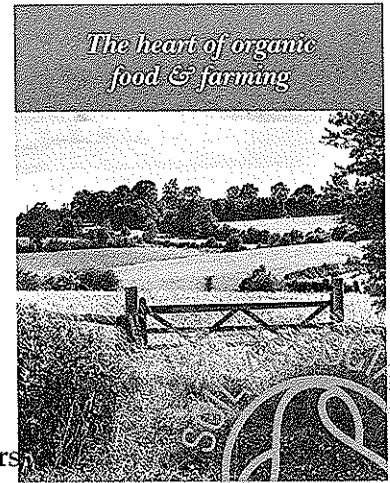


2 July 2008

The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs,
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA



Dear Secretary of State,

I was shocked to learn of the contamination of land by the hormone-based herbicide aminopyralid. I understand that it has now been discovered that this chemical can remain active, damage subsequent crops, and can pose a human health threat, even after the crop to which it has been applied has been eaten by a horse or cow, passed through the animal, been stored as farm yard manure, and eventually applied to another crop. Aminopyralid has previously been cleared by Defra's regulatory system, whose policy should surely be to prevent people from being allowed to use this sort of dangerous chemical. I am sure you will agree that this is unacceptable, and I hope you will take immediate steps to have the chemical withdrawn from use.

I am sure you will agree that UK pesticide regulation should guard against such dangerous contamination, yet this chemical has been deemed 'safe' when it is clearly not. This incident shows that it is quite possible that other chemicals have been categorised as 'safe' with inadequate knowledge of the risk that they posed. It shows that the critics of the current system of pesticide regulation are right to be concerned that it is too dominated by scientists from one side of the debate about pesticide safety, that it fails to take adequate account of the public interest as against the interest of the chemical industry and some farmers, and does not apply the precautionary principal to the use of these chemicals.

In view of the fact that the current system is clearly not 'fit for purpose'. I urge you to instigate an independent enquiry in order to assess how this incident was allowed to occur, and to ensure that it cannot happen again.

I hope the fact that this unpleasant chemical was approved as safe by UK regulators will convince you to join the rest of the EU Member States in supporting the new EU regulation regarding pesticides which are hazardous to human health, and that you will now support the reforms being proposed by the European Parliament.

In view of the importance of this issue to the public interest, I am making this letter available to the press.

Yours sincerely
Patrick Holden

Patrick Holden
Director

Soil Association

South Plaza
Marlborough Street
Bristol BS1 3NX

☎ 0117 314 5000
☎ 0117 314 5001
✉ info@soilassociation.org

www.soilassociation.org

Royal Patron
HRH The Prince of Wales

President
Jonathan Dimbleby

Soil Association
is a company limited
by guarantee

Registered in England
No. 409726

Registered office:
South Plaza
Marlborough Street
Bristol BS1 3NX

Registered Charity
No. 206862