SIXTH MEETING OF THE PESTICIDES FORUM, 11 FEBRUARY 1998 AT THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD, SMITH SQUARE, LONDON SW1

1. Those present

1.1 Those who attended are listed at Annex A.

2. Introduction

2.1 The Chairman welcomed members to the sixth meeting of the Forum, in particular James Clarke, who had replaced Jim Orson as the ADAS representative on the Forum and, for this meeting, Simon Roughton who attended instead of David Barnett on behalf of the Country Landowners Association. An apology had been received from Charles Russell of the National Farmers’ Union of Scotland. He welcomed also Dr Mark Avery, Dr Andy Evans and Jonathan Curtoys from RSPB, who would be presenting a paper on the indirect effects of pesticides on birds later in the morning, and mentioned that Dr Alastair Burn, from English Nature, Dr Clive Wall from MAFF and Kevin Lloyd from DETR, would be presenting papers in the afternoon.

2.2 The Chairman also welcomed Dr John Garrod who had taken the place of Andy Croxford at the DETR and on the joint secretariat. Finally Dr Bob Abel was attending as an observer, instead of Dr Corcoran, for the DETR.

2.3 The Chairman advised the meeting that Ministers were currently considering proposals for revising membership of the Forum and that the Forum’s Annual Report was ready for publication, subject to Ministerial approval of the covering Press Release.

DISCUSSION OF THE PAPERS

3. Minutes of the fifth meeting (PF/min/5) and Matters Arising

3.1 It was noted that Annex C attached to the Minutes was not the BAA update of activities as recorded at 4.2, but a future Forum work programme.

3.2 Matthew Wells alerted members to paper PF/42 which summarized progress on the 26 Action Points that arose from the October meeting and drew attention to the papers submitted ‘for information’, a summary of results from CWS organic farming experiments 1989-1997 (PF/51i); a background note from the Pesticide Exposure Group of Sufferers (PF/51i); and a statistical study of IPU use prepared by the Pesticide Usage Survey Group of CSL (PF/53i).
3.3 Mr Wells confirmed that the papers from Dr Sotherton and Mr Wilgoss, requested as Actions arising out of the October 1997 meeting, would not be called until at least October 1998.

3.4 NFU, WFU and UKASTA all requested that their disquiet about the RPA/Entec report should be recorded as comment in response to Members Action 4. In addition BAA advised that they had submitted a paper on economic instruments (and the RPA/Entec report) to DETR.

3.5 In response to Members/Secretariat Action 1, LEAF confirmed that they had mentioned the Forum in their 1997 Review. Copies of the Review were circulated to the meeting.

4. Reports from Organisations / Forward Look

4.1 Mr Bruce mentioned that the results of the SCARAB and TALISMAN R&D projects were to be the subject of a substantial publication and conference later this year. In the interim, ADAS had produced a summary booklet which was circulated to the meeting.

4.2 The NFU reported that 7,000 growers, representing almost all fresh produce growers, had expressed interest in the NFU/Retailer Assured Produce scheme, with 1,000 having already signed up and paid their subscription. On the Combinable Crops Scheme, of 30,000 growers, 7,000 had shown interest and somewhere between 400 and 500 had now paid their subscription. The NFU hoped to have 4,000 signed up in time for the 1998 harvest.

4.3 The BAA continue to produce ‘good stewardship’ leaflets and have also published a booklet on protecting non-target species entitled ‘Arable Wildlife: Protecting Non-target Species’. Short notes summarising current BAA and BASIS activities are attached. Dr Wale reported that the Fungicide Resistance Action Group, a joint industry/government body, was continuing to issue leaflets on fungicide problems, including leaflets on pesticide use on potato tubers, in conjunction with BCPC.

4.4 The AEA reported that their sprayer testing scheme continued to be a success. They are currently working with M&S on a pilot scheme in 10 areas. AEA believed that the EC was considering a proposal for sprayer testing standards.

4.5 The LEAF Audit will be available from 31 March on 2 x 3.54 diskette for use on a PC running under 3.1, or better, Widows (including Windows 95). LEAF were aware that some farmers had expressed concern that various audit schemes could prove to be costly to some growers who needed to be in a number of schemes.
4.6 Dr Shannon mentioned MAFF’s ongoing Comprehensive Spending Review and *Changing MAFF* initiative, both of which could have an impact on the work of the Forum.

4.7 Finally, ADAS mentioned that the Weed Resistance Action Group had revised its guidelines recently for controlling annual grass weeds.

5. Consider how greater emphasis may be given to responsible pesticide use in statutory training schemes and whether field sales representatives, spray operators and advisers should be encouraged to hold an ICM qualification.

5.1 Barrie Orme (BASIS) reported that 9 courses had been run so far and that 11 more were planned. The AICC planned to put all their members through the course. Some agrochemical companies and agricultural training colleges intended to take part and it was hoped that supermarkets might also take part.

5.2 The Forum agreed that farmer preference is for ‘one stop’ training, of which ICM forms but one important element. Other areas that needed attention included environmental aspects of the farm, the use of specific methods such as drift prevention. Most importantly all training should keep abreast of up to date techniques and developments.

5.3 It was agreed that the Secretariat should carry out a review of all current training on offer with a view to the Forum identifying gaps and priorities. A paper would be presented to the June 1998 meeting.

**ACTION: SECRETARIAT**

6. Consider how farmers/growers could be provided with better information about the environmental impact of individual pesticides.

6.1 John Terry and Peter Beaumont gave a brief background to the joint FWAG/Pesticides Trust project aimed at providing users with more information about pesticide products. The main aim was to promote environmental safety, by providing straightforward advice to users who perhaps had limited knowledge of pesticides and their potential impacts. The line between correct use and abuse could sometimes be very fine. The intention would be to link a COSHH assessment with an assessment of the use of a particular pesticide on a particular farm. It was not intended that the proposal should replace the advice coming from PSD, manufacturers etc.

6.2 Members generally agreed that this further information would be helpful, provided it did not conflict with advice already being given, particularly on the label. Key messages must be the same and must be based on sound advice directly applicable to UK farming conditions. The BAA expressed concern about partial
information particularly if the information was to be aimed at those with a partial knowledge of pesticides.

6.3 The Chairman suggested that PSD could perhaps consider the need for such information in the labelling review.

ACTION: PSD

7. Discussion of paper referred to the Forum by the Cereal Field Margins sub group of the Government’s Biodiversity Steering Group concerning the development of more specific pesticides.

7.1 Mr Wells advised that the revised paper (PF/44/Rev) was based on a request from the Cereal Field Margins Habitat sub-group, of the UK’s Biodiversity Steering Group, to the Forum to consider an Action Point contained in the Cereal Field Margins Action Plan.

7.2 It was established that the CFM Steering group was particularly interested in specific products for the whole field and not just for field margins. BAA commented that generally the agrochemical industry was developing more specific pesticides, although it would be impossible to develop products specifically for use in field margins. [GCT have since suggested that there have been off-label approvals for selective weed control in field margins and that although it may not be possible to develop products for field margins per se, this would not preclude R&D for the use of certain products via the off-label route.]

7.3 The message to send the sub-group was that, whilst manufacturers were continuing to try and develop more specific products, the Forum considers that there is a need for greater awareness amongst farmers and growers of the different pest and disease control techniques already available, including the use of pesticides, that can be used to increase biodiversity in field margins.

ACTION: SECRETARIAT

8. Presentation by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds on the indirect effects of pesticides on farmland birds.

8.1 Dr Mark Avery explained that the report published last year was essentially a review of available information. The report concluded that for the grey partridge at least there was unequivocal experimental evidence that pesticide use had played a part in its population reduction. So far as the other declining species were concerned, there was no direct evidence, but perhaps sufficient circumstantial evidence to suggest that pesticides had played a part. Through the biodiversity initiative, the Government had broadly accepted this and was signed up to help achieve an improvement in the situation.
8.2 Dr Avery suggested some ways in which effects could be reduced. These included, implementing more agri-environment schemes, developing more selective and targeted use techniques, incorporating indirect effects in an environmental impact assessment for new products, increasing training in use and advice, and considering the use of pesticide taxes to encourage farmers to reduce use. Whilst it was agreed that strict pest control could reduce the food supply for some bird species, the RSPB were aware that it was not just the use of pesticides that needed changing, but whole farming techniques.

8.3 Members noted the lack of information and the need for better funding to establish data to help improve knowledge, not only of the impact of pesticides, but also climate change, changes in cropping, the effect of motor traffic, guns, predation and so on. It was important also to consider why some species were increasing in numbers.

8.4 The Chairman thanked the RSPB for their presentation on the report, from which it was clear that that there were a number of lessons to be drawn and that further work was needed.


9.1 Dr Alastair Burn (EN) summarized the main points contained in the paper which had also been presented to the ACP (last October) and the ACP’s Environmental Panel (in June 1997). Essentially the paper pointed out that there were some risks as well as benefits to wildlife from employing IPM techniques IPM needs to be properly focused, assessing all risks both direct and indirect. The paper recommended that the impact of such measures should be monitored. Such monitoring could help users to adopt less hazardous pesticides and provide a valuable input to decision support systems.

9.2 Members welcomed the analysis in the paper and agreed that further measures might need to be taken in specific circumstances. However, in general they believed that IPM was a move in the right direction. The development of a set of indicators to measure the effectiveness of IPM techniques would be very useful and LEAF agreed that their demonstration farms could be used to monitor the impact of ICM techniques. In due course the Forum would need to consider what other measures might be necessary to safeguard the environment apart from ICM.

10. Consideration of MAFF/PSD consultation on Local Environmental Risk Assessments for Pesticides (LERAPs) (PF/48).

10.1 Tim Davis from PSD introduced this paper, explaining that many Forum members and/or their organizations had already seen a copy and commented. It was
apparent that whilst the agriculture industry was broadly in favour of the LERAP proposals, some environmental interests had expressed concerns about the proposed approach. Members considered that, in general, the proposals were a step in the right direction and that LERAPs should be brought in quickly. Mr Bruce confirmed that, subject to Ministers’ views, it was proposed that a scheme would be introduced by the end of 1998.

**ACTION: PSD/DETR**

11. Consideration of DETR consultation paper on economic instruments for water pollution (PF/47).

11.1 Although published by his department, Kevin Lloyd (DETR) said that this consultation paper had been issued on behalf of all Government Departments. Ministers were keen to explore the possibility of a charge on pesticides, which would be just one thread of Government policy on pesticide use, which was still to encourage the minimisation of use. There had been much interest in the proposals, which would cover both agricultural and non-agricultural pesticides.

11.2 The basis on which a charge may be made would be difficult to work out, but the elasticity of demand could be influenced by the use of economic instruments. DETR were planning a further project to look into this and other issues.

11.3 The Chairman expressed concern that pesticide taxes could impede the work of the Forum to promote minimisation, but Mr Lloyd emphasised that their objective would be to support, not hinder, the Forum’s objectives.

11.4 The view was expressed that such a charge would be a tax on UK food production and that pesticides could be ‘personally’ imported to avoid paying the tax; also there was the possibility that it could be cheaper to import produce rather than grow it in the UK.

11.5 Concern was expressed about the possibility of cheaper, and thus possibly less environmentally benign, products becoming more popular, to the detriment of the environment. Mr Lloyd said that the aim of a tax would be to bring an impetus to the development and sale of better, improved and more selective pesticides. If a charge were to be introduced there might well be a differential based on potential environmental impact. In response to a question from BAA, Mr Lloyd advised that replies to the consultation process were available in the DETR Library and that tenders for R&D were advertised. The NFU expressed concern that their comments had been made on the basis of a charge to prevent water pollution and not on pesticides taxes, for which a second consultation should be carried out. Unless set at draconian levels, which could have harmful consequences for the production of food in the UK, NFU, supported by LEAF, WFU and UKASTA, believed that it would not necessarily have the desired effect on the environment. UKASTA expressed concern that Government was too keen to introduce a tax without putting
more effort into the regulatory system, training, the Forum and other voluntary measures. The fact was that pesticide use had declined in the UK over recent years.

11.6 Mr Lloyd acknowledged that more work would be undertaken on the idea of a pesticide charge; he would be interested to see any figures on the decline in use in GB.

ACTION: SECRETARIAT

12. Consideration of the key messages from the IACPA Alliance’s Research Projects (PF/49).

12.1 Dr Clive Wall gave a short presentation on the work of IACPA and its draft report on the key results arising from members’ R&D. The next step for the IACPA membership was to complete its current projects, assess the full economic and environmental benefits and target advisors and others with the important messages which should be delivered to farmers and growers.

12.2 Results so far had shown that with good management and careful planning, pesticide inputs could be reduced and the chemical load on the environment reduced. Margins are maintained as input costs are reduced, although yield might be lower. Grain quality remains generally the same and the only weak link is the profitability of break crops. One interesting message coming out of the research was that, in general, and within the restrictions imposed by the experimental designs and resources available for monitoring, when pesticides were applied correctly no detrimental effects to wildlife or the environment were found.

12.3 Members were concerned that the lessons learnt from the projects should be capable of being used on a site specific basis. It was suggested that perhaps the findings could be summarised along the lines of ‘what works everywhere, what never works and what only works in particular circumstances’.

12.4 Although the results contained in Table 4 (Financial Performance of Wheat) required further study, members agreed that the report demonstrated that a lot of useful work had been done producing some very interesting results. It was agreed that IACPA and RSPB should liaise to see what progress might be made in assessing the impact of integrated farming on bird populations and that the Forum should be kept up to date with developments.

ACTION: IACPA/RSPB
13. Date of next meetings and proposed work programme for June and October 1998. (PF/50)

Next Meetings

13.1 It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 3rd June and that the Autumn meeting will be held on Wednesday 7th October. The dates for 1999 meetings would be agreed at the June meeting.

Work Programme

13.2 Draft Agendas for June and October were tabled by the Secretariat (PF/50), based on discussions at previous meetings. Members suggested a number of additions to these drafts and it was agreed that the Secretariat would draft new Agendas taking these additional suggestions into account and bearing in mind the need to take account of the objectives of the Action Plan. A revised proposal would then be circulated for comment.

ACTION: SECRETARIAT

14. Any Other Business

14.1 Bearing in mind the amount of information that has been published on improved pesticide use, Dr Wale agreed to draft a list of published papers which he would send through to the Secretariat for circulation to members for amendment and additions. The Secretariat envisaged such a list could feature in the 1998 Annual Report.

14.3 Sir Colin Berry advised that he would be unable to attend the next meeting in June and suggested that Dr Andree Carter should be invited to represent the ACP at this meeting.
THOSE PRESENT AT THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE PESTICIDES FORUM

Chairman
Dr David Shannon  
*Chief Scientist, MAFF*

Members
Mr Peter Beaumont  
*The Pesticides Trust*
Professor Sir Colin Berry  
*Advisory Committee on Pesticides*
Mrs Helen Bower  
*Women's Farming Union*
Dr David Brightman  
*National Farmers' Union*
Dr Anne Buckenham  
*British Agrochemicals Association*
Mr James Clarke  
*ADAS*
Dr Keith Dawson  
*United Kingdom Agricultural Supply Trade Association*
Mr Barrie Orme  
*BASIS*
Mr David Richardson  
*Linking Environment and Farming*
Mr Simon Roughton  
*Country Landowners Association*
Mr Ron Saunders  
*Agricultural Engineers Association*
Dr Nick Sotherton  
*The Game Conservancy Trust*
Mr John Terry  
*Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group*
Dr Stuart Wale  
*Scottish Agricultural College*

Non-Forum Presenters
Dr Mark Avery  
*RSPB*
Mr Jonathan Curtoys  
*RSPB*
Dr Andy Evans  
*RSPB*
Dr Alastair Burn  
Mr Kevin Lloyd  
Dr Clive Wall  
Mr Tim Davis

Observers

Dr Bob Abel  
Mr Paul Adamson  
Mr Geoff Bruce  
Ms Lynne Griffith  
Mr Glyn Jones  
Dr Ian Lawrence  
Mr Roy McLachlan  
Mr Brian Murphy

Secretariat

Dr John Garrod  
Mr Matthew Wells
ANNEX B

ACTION LIST

SECRETARIAT

1. To review all current training on offer, to enable the Forum to identify gaps and priorities.

2. Report outcome of Forum discussion on the need for more specific pesticides to the Cereal Field margins sub-group.

3. Provide Kevin Lloyd at DETR with details of pesticide use in GB in recent years.

4. Draw up and circulate revised agendas for the June and October meetings.

MEMBERS

1. IACPA and RSPB to liaise on the impact of integrated farming techniques on bird populations.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

1. PSD to take account of the need for further information on pesticide products in the review on labeling.

2. PSD/DETR would take note of the Forum’s view that the LERAP proposals should be brought in as quickly as possible.