

## Grower Liaison Panel – Sustainable Use of Pesticides (DEFRA Offices, York, 6 November 2014)

Horticulture Wales was amongst a number of representatives invited to attend a Grower Liaison Panel to discuss some of the latest updates and issues concerning the sustainable use of pesticides.

Amongst the topics covered both during and in the immediate aftermath of the meeting were:

- **European Union developments** – attendees heard that EU renewal of approval to use the pesticide loxynil had not been approved, therefore all relevant products must be removed from sale by the end of August 2015. The expiry date for disposal, storage and use of loxynil-derived products is 31 August 2016.
- **Training for Pesticide Application** – delegates learned how the British Christmas Tree Growers Association (BCTGA) and Confor, the woodland and forestry body, have been exploring systems to maintain competence for pesticide application in low-usage sectors without the requirement to retake PA1 and PA6 training courses. It is anticipated this system would incorporate annual online training courses and assessments as an alternative.
- **Operator certification for biopesticides** – the meeting was told that it was likely that any substance that can be applied as a pesticide would require the appropriate training and certification. Taking one specific example, it was anticipated that operator certification would be necessary to use commodities such as urea, which can be used as a fungicide.
- **New Crop Definitions List (baby leaf crops)** – the updated Crop Definitions List has been published on the [Health and Safety Executive’s pesticides website](#). Delegates were told that the current authorisations for spinach and chard as baby leaf crops were still under discussion, while it was emphasised that, in relation to the list, the definition of ‘flowering plants’ means ‘all plants that flower’.
- **Surface water protection** – a new zonal harmonisation scheme for protecting surface water, which includes specific instructions for drift reduction, has been published on the [Chemicals](#)



[Regulation Directorate \(CRD\) website](#). The vast majority of the scheme is unchanged from the initial plans published for consultation, apart from the following three amendments:

- The scheme applies to **all** three star-rated drift reduction technologies, not just nozzles
  - Buffer zone increments should be set at 6, 12, and 18 metre intervals to provide a more appropriate fit with the majority of boom sprayers
  - The use of drift reduction technology will not be required in cases more than 30 metres away from a water body.
- **Maximum Residue Levels (MRL)** – a revised and updated list of commodities has been [published on the CRD website](#), while attendees heard that the long-term aim to include biocides has been put on hold. New regulations concerning MRL are likely to be introduced within the next couple of years; it is anticipated these rules will be much more comprehensive, particularly concerning food crops. Attempts are currently being made to collate data based on the MRLs found in produce, although this is being hampered by confusion between grower-applied materials and disinfectants used in food processing.
- **Residues in water** – while these residues are already harmonised under the European Water Framework Directive (WFD), attendees were told that the UK’s action plan is to improve the level of practice in water quality compliance, particularly in the landscape sector.
- **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** – EU regulations declare that all Member States must devise a mission statement on how they will implement IPM, which will identify how to minimise pesticide use by utilising alternative methods. The UK’s international reputation for IPM is generally very good. Attendees agreed that the proposed UK directive must focus on encouraging farmers and growers to take up IPM.
- **Perceptions about pesticide use** – delegates raised concerns that while in many cases pesticide use is generally safe, the public perception is often the complete opposite. One attendee made the observation that driving a car is far more hazardous and harmful to the environment than using pesticides, but it is not politically expedient to say so.

