

Sex, Lies and Herbicides: the truth about atrazine

The corporate influence on independent science



Professor Tyrone B Hayes

What is the cost of cheap herbicides? Professor Tyrone B Hayes has carried out groundbreaking research showing that low levels of a widely-used weed killer have a potent effect on the hormonal system. Atrazine chemically castrates and feminises exposed male amphibians. In some frog species, it reduced testosterone and induced egg development in males.

An increasing number of pesticides are found to have these endocrine-disrupting effects. In humans, atrazine exposure is associated with decreased fertility and an increased risk of prostate cancer in men and an increase in breast cancer in women. These associations in humans are supported by experimental findings in rodents.

Professor Hayes' initial studies were carried out as part of research funded by the manufacturer. Despite compelling findings about the devastating effects on frogs, and the risks to humans from this herbicide, the manufacturer has not published this research.

Regulators in Europe have voted not to approve atrazine use in its Member States. The UK government will allow use to continue, at least until December 2007, because it is the mainstay of weed control in maize, and is cheap.

In this year's **Rachel Carson Memorial Lecture**, Professor Hayes will explore the effects of pesticides such as atrazine, and ask how much regulators are probing behind the industry-funded studies put forward to support their products. With decreasing public funding available for research, how will the independent voice of science protect the public?

Professor Hayes is Professor of developmental endocrinology at the University of California, Berkeley. In July 2005 he received the Jennifer Altman Foundation 'Upstream Fund' Award, which honours the pursuit of science in the public interest.



Middle Temple Hall

The lecture will be held in London at Middle Temple Hall, one of the finest examples of an Elizabethan Hall in the country, on **1 December 2005**, to coincide with the annual 'Day of no pesticide use' in memory of the victims of Bhopal. With places limited to 270, early booking is advisable. Tickets are £30 or £25 if booked by 31 October. The evening starts at 6.30pm and will include a delicious organic buffet with wine, exhibitions and music. For more details or to book contact Anna Scalera 020 7065 0905 annascalera@pan-uk.org