

Patricia D. Hastings

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To: "NJinPAS Network" <NJinPASNetwork@AESOP.RUTGERS.EDU>
Sent: Tuesday, February 11, 2003 11:03 AM
Subject: US Methyl Bromide Exemptions Submitted to the UN Ozone Secretariat

Action: The United States nominated 'critical uses' of the fumigant methyl bromide to be exempted from the 2005 phaseout agreed under the terms of a 1987 agreement known as 'The Montreal Protocol'. The critical uses requested for exemption are for crops and post-harvest uses where the US 'believes the users currently have no safe, effective and economically viable alternatives'.

EPA provides that 'the (exemption) request reflects a careful balance in meeting the needs of protecting the ozone layer, U.S. agriculture and fulfilling our obligations under the Montreal Protocol, the international treaty that protects stratospheric ozone.'

Background: Methyl bromide is chiefly used as a gas soil fumigant against insects, termites, rodents, weeds, nematodes, and soil-borne diseases. It has been used to fumigate agricultural commodities, grain elevators, mills, ships, clothes, furniture, and greenhouses. About 70% of methyl bromide produced in the U.S. goes into pesticidal formulations. Trade names include Brom-o-Gas, Bromomethane, Celfume, Embafume, Haltox, MB, MeBr, Methogas, Profume, Terr-o-Gas, and Zytex.

As a halon compound, emissions are long lived reaching the stratosphere causing ozone depletion. The Ozone Layer protects the earth from harmful radiation such as UV-B.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has been addressing this issue since 1977. Nations of the world first came together to address this problem in 1985 at 'The Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer' and later in 1987 at the 'The Montreal Protocol'. These treaties have been amended four times. The net result is that governments committed themselves to protect the ozone layer and to co-operate with each other in scientific research to improve understanding of the atmospheric processes. This agreement regulates the production of ozone-depleting substances, such as methyl bromide.

The U.S. exemption nominations were submitted to the Ozone Secretariat of the United Nations. After review by an advisory technical committee, exemption requests from phaseout will be discussed and an agreement will be reached for the continued production and import of methyl bromide after 2005 to meet authorized critical needs.

Sources: UNEP Ozone Treaties @ <http://www.unep.org/ozone/treaties.shtml>; Ozone Frequently Asked Questions @ <http://www.unep.org/ozone/faq.shtml>. EPA Pesticide Program Updates from EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs 2/07/03. Pesticide Action Network @ http://www.pesticideinfo.org/PCW/List_Products.jsp?PCCode=053201&ChemName=Methyl%20bromide. Extoxnet @ <http://ace.orst.edu/cgi-bin/mfs/01/pips/methylbr.htm?8#mfs>. See EPA Pesticide Registration Notice 95-4 @ http://www.epa.gov/PR_Notices/pr95-4.html for details on EPA's priority review of methyl bromide alternatives.

If you would like me to forward the EPA release on this, please contact me. It includes more detail on the US process involving stakeholders to determine its exemption requests.

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