



The Peak Body for the Australian Organic Sector

From the desk of:
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MEDIA RELEASE

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Cancer Pesticide Link – US President’s Cancer Panel Report

The report recommends that people consume food grown without pesticides, chemical fertilizers and growth hormones

‘The latest report by the US President’s Cancer Panel states that environmental toxins, especially chemicals are the main causes of cancer and raises particular concern over the exposure levels for children.’ Andre Leu, Chairman of the Organic Federation of Australia stated

‘The report that has just been published by the *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute* also stated that the current methods of testing and regulating chemicals such as pesticides are inadequate.’ Andre said.

‘Very significantly, the report recommends that people consume food grown without pesticides, chemical fertilizers and growth hormones’ Mr Leu said

Several critical issues around chemicals have been raised by the report.

Most Chemicals have not Been Tested for Safety

‘Only a few hundred of the more than 80,000 chemicals in use in the United States have been tested for safety.’

Pesticides Linked to Many Types of Cancers

‘Nearly 1,400 pesticides have been registered (i.e., approved) by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for agricultural and non-agricultural use. Exposure to these chemicals has been linked to brain/central nervous system (CNS), breast, colon, lung, ovarian (female spouses), pancreatic, kidney, testicular, and stomach cancers, as well as Hodgkin and non-Hodgkin lymphoma, multiple myeloma, and soft tissue sarcoma. Pesticide-exposed farmers, pesticide applicators, crop duster pilots, and manufacturers also have been found to have elevated rates of prostate cancer, melanoma, other skin cancers, and cancer of the lip.’

‘Approximately 40 chemicals classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) as known, probable, or possible human carcinogens, are used in EPA-registered pesticides now on the market.’

Testing is Inadequate

‘Available evidence on the level of potential harm and increased cancer risk from many environmental exposures is insufficient or equivocal. The Panel is particularly concerned that the impact, mechanisms of action, and potential interactions of some known and suspected carcinogens are poorly defined. Meaningful measurement and assessment of the cancer risk associated with many environmental exposures are hampered by a lack of accurate measurement tools and methodologies. This is particularly true regarding cumulative exposure to specific established or possible carcinogens, gene-environment interactions, emerging technologies, and the effects of multiple agent exposures.’

Current Testing Fails to Accurately Represent Human Exposure to Harmful Chemicals

‘Some scientists maintain that current toxicity testing and exposure limit-setting methods fail to accurately represent the nature of human exposure to potentially harmful chemicals. Current toxicity testing relies heavily on animal studies that utilize doses substantially higher than those likely to be encountered by humans.’

Testing Fails to Account for Harmful Effects of Low Doses

‘These data—and the exposure limits extrapolated from them—fail to take into account harmful effects that may occur only at very low doses. Further, chemicals typically are administered when laboratory animals are

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in their adolescence, a methodology that fails to assess the impact of in utero, childhood, and lifelong exposures.'

Testing Fails to Account for Combinations of Chemicals'

'In addition, agents are tested singly rather than in combination.'

'Single-agent toxicity testing and reliance on animal testing are inadequate to address the backlog of untested chemicals already in use and the plethora of new chemicals introduced every year.'

Women Carry Higher Levels of Chemicals

'Further, studies by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that while all Americans carry many foreign chemicals in their bodies, women have higher levels of many of these chemicals than do men.'

Chemical Contaminants are Passed on to the Next Generation

'Some of these chemicals are found in maternal blood, placental tissue, and breast milk samples from pregnant women and mothers who recently gave birth. These findings indicate that chemical contaminants are being passed on to the next generation, both prenatally and during breastfeeding. Some chemicals indirectly increase cancer risk by contributing to immune and endocrine dysfunction that can influence the effect of carcinogens.'

Children also Exposed to Chemicals in Utero

'Children also can be exposed to toxins in utero via placental transfer and/or after birth via breast milk. Tests of umbilical cord blood found traces of nearly 300 pollutants in newborns' bodies, such as chemicals used in fast-food packaging, flame retardants present in household dust, and pesticides.'

Children Are at Special Risk for Cancer Due to Environmental Contaminants.

'They [children] are at special risk due to their smaller body mass and rapid physical development, both of which magnify their vulnerability to known or suspected carcinogens, including radiation. Numerous environmental contaminants can cross the placental barrier; to a disturbing extent, babies are born "pre-polluted." Children also can be harmed by genetic or other damage resulting from environmental exposures sustained by the mother (and in some cases, the father). There is a critical lack of knowledge and appreciation of environmental threats to children's health and a severe shortage of researchers and clinicians trained in children's environmental health.'

Children's Cancer Rates are Increasing

'Yet over the same period (1975–2006), cancer incidence in U.S. children under 20 years of age has increased'

Leukemia Rates Higher for Children Exposed to Pesticides

'Leukemia rates are consistently elevated among children who grow up on farms, among children whose parents used pesticides in the home or garden, and among children of pesticide applicators. Because these chemicals often are applied as mixtures, it has been difficult to clearly distinguish cancer risks associated with individual agents.'

Concern over Food Residues being too High

'Only 23.1 percent of [food] samples had zero pesticide residues detected, 29.5 percent had one residue, and the remainder had two or more. The majority of residues detected were at levels far below EPA tolerances ...but the data on which the tolerances are based are heavily criticized by environmental health professionals and advocates as being inadequate and unduly influenced by industry.'

Regulation of Environmental Contaminants is Inadequate to Protect from Harm

'The prevailing regulatory approach in the United States is reactionary rather than precautionary. That is, instead of taking preventive action when uncertainty exists about the potential harm a chemical or other environmental contaminant may cause, a hazard must be incontrovertibly demonstrated before action to ameliorate it is initiated. Moreover, instead of requiring industry or other proponents of specific chemicals, devices, or activities to prove their safety, the public bears the burden of proving that a given environmental exposure is harmful.'

Consume Food Grown Without Pesticides and Fertilisers

The report recommends that people consume food grown without pesticides, fertilisers and growth hormones.

'Contrary to popular belief washing or peeling conventional produce only removes a percentage of the pesticides as they tend to be absorbed through the whole of the produce.' Andre Leu said

'The most effective way to avoid pesticides is to eat organic food. A study published in Environmental Health Perspectives found that children who eat organic foods have lower levels of pesticides in their bodies.' Andre stated

The University of Washington researchers who conducted the study concluded '*The dose estimates suggest that consumption of organic fruits, vegetables, and juice can reduce children's exposure levels from above to below the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's current guidelines, thereby shifting exposures from a range of uncertain risk to a range of negligible risk. Consumption of organic produce appears to provide a relatively simple way for parents to reduce their children's exposure...*'

-ENDS-

The full report can be found at <http://deainfo.nci.nih.gov/advisory/pcp/pcp.htm>

The Organic Federation of Australia is the peak body for the organic sector. For further information please visit www.ofa.org.au The OFA will help consumers identify genuine organic products during Trust Organic from August 19 to Sept 05 2010

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