



BEYOND PESTICIDES

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Studies Link Range of Major Diseases to Pesticides, New Database Launched

Washington, DC, August 18, 2010 – Links to pesticide exposure are being found in a growing number of studies that evaluate the causes of preventable diseases --including asthma, autism and learning disabilities, birth defects and reproductive dysfunction, diabetes, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases, and several types of cancer. A new database, released today, tracks published epidemiologic and real world exposure studies. The studies challenge the effectiveness of risk-assessment-based regulation which is intended to manage adverse disease outcomes, but is criticized for allowing the uses of chemicals that can be replaced by green technologies and practices.

To capture the range of diseases linked to pesticides through epidemiologic studies, the national environmental and public health group Beyond Pesticides launched in the summer issue of its newsletter, *Pesticides and You*, the *Pesticide-Induced Diseases Database* to track the studies. "A read through the scientific literature on pesticides and major preventable diseases afflicting us in the 21st century suggests that one of the first responses called for is an all out effort to stop using toxic pesticides," said Jay Feldman, executive director of Beyond Pesticides. The database begins an ongoing effort by Beyond Pesticides to maintain this comprehensive database of the studies that the group says "supports an urgent need to shift to toxic-free practices and policies."

The group is calling for alternatives assessment in environmental rulemaking that creates a regulatory trigger to adopt alternatives and drive the market to go green." Under risk assessment, we constantly play with 'mitigation measures' that the *Pesticide-Induced Diseases Database* tells us over and over is a failed human experiment," said Mr. Feldman.

The alternatives assessment approach differs most dramatically from risk assessment in rejecting uses and exposures deemed acceptable under risk assessment calculations, but unnecessary because of the availability of safer alternatives. For example, in agriculture, where the database shows clear links to pesticide use and multiple types of cancer, it would no longer be possible to use hazardous pesticides, as it is with risk assessment-based policy, when there are clearly effective organic systems with competitive yields that, in fact, outperform chemical-intensive agriculture in drought years. This same analysis can be applied to home and garden use of pesticides where households using pesticides suffer elevated rates of cancer.

Earlier this year Beyond Pesticides released its *Organic Food: Eating with a Conscience* guide that explains how foods grown with hazardous chemicals contaminate water and air, hurt biodiversity, harm farmworkers, and kill bees, birds, fish and other wildlife even though the finished commodities, often referred to as "clean," may have minimal or nondetectable residues. The guide can be found at www.eatingwithaconscience.org.

The *Pesticide-Induced Diseases Database*, which currently contains 383 entries of epidemiologic and laboratory exposure studies, will be continually updated to track the emerging findings and trends. To view the database, go to www.beyondpesticides.org/health.