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Another frivolous atrazine class action lawsuit only harms U.S. farmers

SAINT LOUIS, Mo. (March 9, 2010) – After plaintiffs’ attorneys filed a federal lawsuit Monday in the Southern District of Illinois, Kurtis B. Reeg, attorney for defendant [Syngenta](#) Crop Protection, Inc., said another frivolous [atrazine](#) lawsuit only harms U.S. farmers.

“In these tough economic times, one may wonder why anyone – other than class action lawyers – would seek to destroy what [EPA estimates](#) is a \$2 billion annual economic benefit to the nation, and all of the jobs that go with it,” Reeg said. “This lawsuit has no merit because we know from EPA-mandated testing that no water systems since 2005 have exceeded the annual average guidance for atrazine. We intend to defend ourselves vigorously.”

Atrazine is a widely-used herbicide in the U.S. and 60 countries around the world to help grow safe, affordable and abundant crops, including corn, sorghum, and sugar cane. EPA re-registered atrazine in 2006, stating it would cause no harm to the general population.

“This suit is no surprise, as the same plaintiffs’ attorneys who have been trying a wasteful case in Madison County, Ill., have been shopping this around for years,” said Reeg. “Just last month, plaintiffs in Illinois voluntarily dismissed numerous damage and liability claims they had made in their case. With that disarray, it appears attorneys are scrambling to another venue in which to waste scarce taxpayer resources with junk science and false allegations for personal gain at the expense of U.S. agriculture.

“Filing in federal court appears to be a mis-step, given the Iberville Parish, La., case which was dismissed by Chief Judge Butler in Mobile, Ala., in 1999. Judge Butler ruled that removing safe and approved levels of atrazine from drinking water was unnecessary and that shifting the costs of such unnecessary removal was wrong. This decision was also upheld on appeal, and we hope the court will rely on this past verdict to guide future decisions.

“Everyone should bear in mind that if a 150-pound adult drank literally thousands of gallons of water with atrazine at three parts-per-billion every day for 70 years, she still would not reach the exposure level at which no adverse impact has been detected in the laboratory.

“We know these communities are strapped for cash, and suing companies to upgrade their decades-old water systems may seem like an easy way to raise money, but it only harms local farmers who rely on these safely-regulated crop protection tools for their livelihood and to help cost-effectively feed a quickly growing consumer public.

“The many statements by farmers and their associations attest to their support for atrazine and its safety in use. They have for half a century. EPA’s atrazine regulation is a model of sound science carefully applied in its mission of protecting all Americans and our environment.

“As a hallmark of good stewardship, my client worked voluntarily with stakeholders for years and since then also with EPA to monitor the water systems where minute detections of atrazine may occasionally

occur. Since 2005, no water system has had an annual average atrazine level in its drinking water greater than the EPA standard, which itself carries a 1000-fold safety factor.

“The mere filing of this new lawsuit suggests additional forum shopping by out-of-town attorneys who turn neighbor against neighbor to seek profit for themselves. “

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