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Report to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee
from Wayne O'Donnell, Manager, Biosecurity

Aquatic Plant Control – Herbicide Registration

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of recent developments regarding the proposal to register the herbicide Endothall for the control of a range of aquatic pest plants in New Zealand.

2. Background

A number of reports have been presented to the Committee since 1999 concerning the lack of an effective commercial herbicide to control aquatic pest plants in the region, particularly in areas where water quality is poor. The main focus of these reports has been the increasing problems associated with Hornwort spread in the wetlands adjacent to Lake Wairarapa.

Hornwort is presently found in lakes and waterways throughout the North Island. Recently, the first South Island infestation was located in the Tasman District.

With the Committee's approval, a trial using Endothall was conducted in a small part of the northern wetlands in March 2001. The trial was arranged by NIWA as an extension of their laboratory work. Post operational monitoring confirmed that Endothall was very successful in controlling Hornwort at low dose rates. It also satisfactorily controlled Lagarasiphon, another aquatic pest plant. Effects on native aquatics was negligible.

NIWA's work was undertaken under an Experimental Users Permit, issued by the former Pesticides Board. As Endothall is not registered in New Zealand for commercial use, a short term permit was required for research purposes. The permit expired in August 2002.

3. Registration Proposal

There is an increasing demand for commercial access to Endothall from a number of regional councils, DoC, LINZ, and hydroelectric power companies. Initially, these organisations requested the importing company, Elliot Chemicals Ltd., to seek registration with the Environmental Risk Management Agency (ERMA). However, Elliot Chemicals have understandably argued that seeking registration is not a commercially viable proposition. As there is no data protection available, any import company could utilise the registration at no regulatory cost to them.

The registration process is estimated to cost \$100,000.

After discussions between NIWA, Elliot Chemicals and the Wellington Regional Council, it was decided that registration should still be pursued. However, a new proposal was agreed. This includes the formation of a consortium of stakeholders who would apply for registration under the guidance of NIWA. The consortium would have full access to research information and overseas data available from NIWA and Elliot Chemicals. Essentially, the consortium would be a silent funding partner with the application produced and presented by NIWA.

Letters have recently been forwarded to all Regional Councils, DoC, LINZ, Fish and Game Council, Forest and Bird Protection Society and affected power companies. This letter invites the organisations to become a member of the consortium and to provide a funding contribution towards the registration costs. In an earlier report to the Committee, it was agreed that a contribution of up to \$10,000 be made to assist registration. These funds would be secured from the existing Pest Plants budget.

Elliot Chemicals have advised that organisations that provide funding assistance for registration will receive a significant discount on their purchasing price for a five year period. The discount percentage will be determined by the level of financial support.

NIWA have requested that support or otherwise for the consortium proposal is communicated by the end of October 2002.

4. Communications

It would be appropriate to provide a press release following confirmation that a consortium has been formed and an application for registration proposed.

5. Recommendation

1. *That the Committee confirms support for the registration of the herbicide, Endothall.*
2. *That the Committee agrees to membership of the consortium of stakeholders seeking registration.*

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