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### **EPA Announces Halt to Lindane for Ag Use** *Risk to Children Remains Through Pharmaceutical Products*

EPA today announced the withdrawal of all agricultural products in the U.S. containing the pesticide lindane. Environmental health groups around the country applaud the step, but are critical of EPA's claim to be the best agency in the world for pesticide regulation, and are calling for phaseout of the remaining uses of lindane.

"The phaseout of lindane's agricultural uses is a long overdue step, especially important to protecting indigenous peoples in the Arctic," says Pamela Miller, Director of the Alaska Community Action on Toxics, an organization that works closely with indigenous communities. "We're pleased the U.S. is finally moving to join the rest of the international community that has already stopped using this harmful pesticide."

All uses of lindane have already been banned in 52 countries around the world. Until today, the U.S. used up to 230,000 pounds of lindane yearly in seed treatment products, mostly on corn and wheat. The withdrawal allows continued use of existing stocks of lindane seed treatment products. Lindane use continues to be allowed for treatment of lice and scabies in pharmaceutical products regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

"It's about time we stopped using this long-lasting, neurotoxic pesticide," says Kristin Schafer, Program Coordinator for Pesticide Action Network (PAN). "We're pleased EPA has finally done the right thing – but this chemical linked to brain tumors and hormone disruption is still allowed in lotions and shampoos. We're now asking for the public's help to get FDA to withdraw lindane's pharmaceutical uses."

Pharmaceutical uses of lindane for lice and scabies have been banned in California since 2002, and legislation promoting similar bans is moving forward in other states including Michigan and New York. "Lindane is no longer allowed on pets or seeds, why are we still allowing use on kids?" asks Laura McCarthy, Program Associate with Citizens' Environmental Coalition in Albany, New York.

Over the past three years, a coalition of groups in the U.S., Canada and Mexico has been pressing for a phaseout of lindane as government representatives developed a North American Regional Action Plan (NARAP) under the Commission on Environmental Cooperation. Mexico agreed to phaseout all uses of lindane in 2005, and Canada phased out all agricultural uses in 2004. Lindane was initially targeted for restriction and phaseout by EPA in 1977, and it is currently being considered for international phaseout under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs Treaty).

“All uses of this chemical are already being phased out in Mexico,” says Fernando Bejarano, Director of Red de Acción en Plaguicidas y sus Alternativas en México (PAN Mexico). “We’re pleased to see that the U.S. is following Mexico’s lead in phasing out lindane in agriculture, and we hope the government will take the next step and ban use in shampoos and lotions as well.”

Lindane is a known neurotoxin that can cause seizures, damage the nervous system, and weaken the immune system. Exposure may also cause cancer and disrupt the human and animal hormone systems. Because lindane is highly persistent and travels globally via air and water, its use poses an exposure risk to people far from the source. Lindane is one of the most abundant pesticides in Arctic air and water, and in the face of overwhelming evidence, EPA has acknowledged that indigenous people in the Arctic are faced with excessive exposure to lindane through their traditional diet.

The lindane news precedes the controversial announcement expected Thursday of EPA’s reregistration of more than 20 organophosphate and carbamate pesticides, despite strenuous objections voiced by thousands of EPA staff scientists who say these chemicals pose unacceptable risk to children’s health. In a news advisory released Tuesday, EPA highlighted lindane’s withdrawal (a 29 year process) and Thursday’s controversial reregistrations as evidence that “U.S. pesticide safety is the highest in the world.” Public health and scientist advocacy groups staunchly disagree, and are calling for an end to industry pressure on EPA and FDA government scientists.

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**Available for interviews:**

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**Resources:**

PANNA Lindane web pages: [www.panna.org/campaigns/lindane.htm](http://www.panna.org/campaigns/lindane.htm).

May 25 PEER Press Release -"Scientists Protest Pending Pesticide Approvals:  
Unacceptable Risk to Children and Political Pressure on Scientists Decried"  
[http://www.peer.org/news/news\\_id.php?row\\_id=691](http://www.peer.org/news/news_id.php?row_id=691)

Industry Pressure on FDA Scientists:  
[http://www.ucsusa.org/scientific\\_integrity/interference/fda-scientist-survey.html](http://www.ucsusa.org/scientific_integrity/interference/fda-scientist-survey.html)