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IFAS EXTENSION

Handbook of Florida Water Regulation: Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act¹

Michael T. Olexa, Luke D'Isernia, Laura Minton, Dulcy Miller, and Sarah Corbett²

Preface

This handbook is designed to provide an accurate, current, and authoritative summary of the principle Federal and Florida laws that directly or indirectly relate to agriculture. This handbook should provide a basic overview of the many rights and responsibilities that farmers and farmland owners have under both Federal and Florida laws as well as the appropriate contact information to obtain more detailed information. However, the reader should be aware that because the laws, administrative rulings, and court decisions on which this handbook is based are subject to constant revision, portions of this publication could become outdated at anytime. Several details of cited laws are also left out due to space limitations.

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Overview

The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) was originally passed in 1947 and significantly amended in the 1970s. These and subsequent amendments regulate all phases of pesticide sale, use, handling, and disposal. In 1996, the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA) again amended FIFRA, especially the process of establishing tolerances for pesticide residues in food and feed.

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 2. Michael T. Olexa, Professor, Food and Resource Economics Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL; Director, Agricultural Law Center, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL; and Chair, Agricultural Law Committee of The Florida Bar. Luke D'Isernia, former student (graduated cum laude in 2005), Levin College of Law, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL. Laura Minton, Attorney, Dean, Mead, Egerton, Bloodworth, Capouano, and Bozarth, Orlando, FL. Dulcy Miller, attorney, Foley and Lardner, LLP, Orlando, FL. Sarah Corbett, Attorney, Florida Second District Court of Appeal, Lakeland, FL.

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Definitions

Pesticide

Pesticide is broadly defined within the meaning of the FIFRA as essentially any substance used to regulate, prevent, repel, or destroy any pest or plant; any substance or mixture of substances intended for use as a plant regulator, defoliant, or desiccant; and any nitrogen stabilizer, except that the term "pesticide" shall not include any article that is a "new animal drug" under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, that has been determined by the Secretary of Health and Human Services not to be a new animal drug by a regulation establishing conditions of use for the article, or that is an animal feed under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act bearing or containing a new animal drug.

Pest

Pest includes insects, rodents, nematodes, fungus, weeds, terrestrial and aquatic plants, viruses, bacteria, and any other living organism that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designates as a pest.

Who Enforces the FIFRA?

FIFRA is administered by the EPA, but specifies that states are to have primary enforcement responsibility if they demonstrate to the EPA that they have adopted adequate regulations and enforcement mechanisms. Florida has entered into several cooperative agreements with the EPA and now shoulders the responsibilities for testing and training permit applicants. In these areas, the EPA now has only a supervisory position. However, the registration of pesticides and the monitoring of pesticide producers are still regulated *entirely* by the EPA's central office.

What Do Pesticide Labels Mean?

One of the most significant aspects of FIFRA is the body of labeling requirements. Under the Act, pesticides must be labeled with the following:

- The ingredients.

- Instructions for use.
- The EPA registration number.
- All necessary warnings or restrictions.

FIFRA requires strict compliance to the instructions printed on all pesticide labels. Labeling changes must meet National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health requirements.

Pesticide labels are also important because they have become a central tool of enforcing FIFRA and state laws (see "What Is So Important about Pesticide Labels?" section of FE590).

Which Pesticides Need Registration, Licensing, and/or Permitting?

FIFRA requires that all pesticides be registered with the EPA before they may be sold, distributed, or used. A pesticide's registration may be canceled by the EPA if the manufacturer fails to have it re-registered or if the EPA later determines it to be harmful. Sixty days after the deadline, the administrator can cancel the registration or licensing of a pesticide.

States may impose additional conditions on pesticide use where special problems related to their use are encountered.

General-Use Pesticides

General-use pesticides may be applied by anyone and no permit is required, although the user must still comply with labeling requirements, label instructions, and other regulations.

Restricted-Use Pesticides

Restricted-use pesticides may be applied by three categories of applicators as follows:

1. Private applicators who apply pesticides in producing an agricultural commodity on their own lands or on lands under their control. Applicators must be aware of regulatory restrictions to avoid adverse effects on the environment. Private applicators must be licensed to use pesticides.

2. Commercial applicators who apply pesticides to other people's lands in exchange for a fee. Commercial applicators are also required to be licensed.
3. Experimental use applicators, who are usually manufacturers or researchers, are required to have an experimental-use permit to test an unregistered pesticide in order to gather data to support its registration.

Restricted-use applicators must keep records comparable to commercial applicators. The state can require specific minimum training for all applicators.

Each permitting category is subject to separate testing and certification procedures and may be subject to different penalties for violations.

How Should Pesticides Be Stored and Disposed?

The FIFRA requirements for adherence to label instructions also extend to the storage and disposal of pesticides. Furthermore, pesticides often fall within the "hazardous waste" classifications of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), and are usually subject to "solid waste" disposal regulations. The RCRA and FIFRA sections of this publication should be reviewed before storing or disposing of any pesticides.

The EPA provides guidelines for the storage and disposal of pesticides that, while not mandatory, are helpful in dealing with specifics of locating storage sites, protecting groundwater, and avoiding environmental contamination.

What Are the Penalties?

Commercial applicators, wholesalers, dealers, retailers, registrants, or distributors who violate FIFRA or their permits are subject to civil fines of up to \$5,000 per offense. No civil penalties can be assessed against these parties without a hearing. They are also subject to criminal penalties of \$25,000 and one-year imprisonment for knowing violations.

Private applicators are entitled to a written warning. First violations by private applicators that use or hold registered pesticides or use dilutions of

registered pesticides only to provide a service of pest control in violation of FIFRA are punishable by a civil penalty of up to \$500, subsequent violations may be punished by a fine of up to \$1,000. Knowing violations may bring criminal fines of \$1,000 and/or 30-days imprisonment.

Producers of pesticides, registrants, and applicants for registration, who knowingly violate FIFRA, are subject to criminal penalties of up to \$50,000 and one-year imprisonment. However, no private right of action exists under FIFRA regulations. Employers may also be assessed for the violations of their employees or agents acting on their behalf.

Violators of FIFRA may also be subject to penalties under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act; Resource Conservation and Recovery Act; and Occupational Safety and Health Act.

Also pesticide drift and runoff containing pesticides is a major water pollutant from non-point sources. These chemicals can enter and contaminate water, killing fish and wildlife, poisoning food sources, and destroying the habitat of animals. Careless use and or disposal of pesticides can lead to violations, liability, and penalties under several of the acts and programs discussed in this handbook. To reduce non-point source contamination from pesticides and liability for contamination, pesticide users can apply Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques based on the specific soils, climate, pest history, and crop for a particular field. IPM helps to minimize the need for pesticide use and manages necessary applications to minimize pesticide movement from the land.

What Is Exempt from FIFRA?

No pesticide, device, or active ingredient used in producing a pesticide intended only for export to a foreign country will be deemed a violation of FIFRA when they are prepared or packed according to the directions of the foreign purchaser, except that producers of such pesticides, devices, and active ingredients used in producing pesticides will be subject to the storage, disposal, transportation, registration, and recordkeeping provisions of FIFRA, and in the case of a pesticide not registered under

FIFRA or sold from existing stocks and whose registration is suspended or cancelled, if, prior to export, the foreign purchaser has signed a statement acknowledging that the purchaser understands that such pesticide is not registered for use in the United States and cannot be sold in the United States under FIFRA. A copy of this statement will be transmitted to the appropriate government official of the importing government.

The Administrator of the EPA may, at his/her discretion, exempt any federal or state agency from any provision of FIFRA, if the Administrator determines that emergency conditions exist which require such an exemption. In determining whether or not such emergency conditions exist, the Administrator must consult with the Secretary of Agriculture and the governor of any state concerned if they request such a determination.

For the latest list of exemptions from FIFRA, please contact the EPA.

Source

7 United States Code, Sections 136 to 136y

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