



AAPSE UPDATE

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Last year I completed a seventeen-month assignment working with Dr. John Impson, National Program Leader for USDA's Pesticide Applicator Training Program. Last year was also my first full year as president of AAPSE. One of the many things that impressed me about working in Washington, was the incredible number of opportunities there are to make a difference, to obtain a different perspective, and to work with a so many different organizations on so many different projects. The problem is there wasn't enough time in the day to do it all. We all know that managing time is tough.

One of my friends who knew I would have a hard time managing time sent me the following story about a time management expert who was addressing a group of gifted students, all of whom were overachievers. As he stood in front of these high-powered overachievers, he said, "OK, time for a quiz." Then he pulled out a one-gallon, wide-mouthed Mason jar and set it on the table in front of him. From beneath the table he produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them, one at a time, into the jar. When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "Is this jar full?" Everyone in the class said, "Yes!" "Really?" he said. He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of small gravel. Then he dumped some of the gravel in and shook the jar, causing pieces of the gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks. He smiled and asked the group once more, "Is the jar full?"

By this time the class was on to him. "Probably not." One of them answered. "Good!" he replied. He again reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand and started dumping the sand in the jar. The sand went into all the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, "Is this jar full?" "No!" the class shouted. Once again he said, "Good!" Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Then he looked up at the class and asked, "What is the point of this illustration?" One overachiever raised his hand and said, "The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard, you can always fit some more things into it!" "No," the speaker replied, "that's not the point. The truth this illustration teaches us is: If you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all."

I've thought about this illustration, trying to figure out what AAPSE's "big rocks" were. Last year when I gave the AAPSE Update I thought I had a pretty good idea about what AAPSE should be doing. But then someone reminded me that Dr. Ansley Throckmorton, on the occasion of assuming the

presidency of Bangor Theological Seminary, said, "First management had plans, and then strategic plans. Now we have vision, and we're only one small step from hallucination." Well, AAPSE is moving from plans to strategic plans, and, of course, along with that will come vision. I hope AAPSE's next president, Dr. Norm Nesheim, doesn't stand before you next year and report that I had been hallucinating.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the American Association of Pesticide Safety Educators, AAPSE, let me say that our genesis comes from two sources. First, a need to encourage USDA to support pesticide education programs that promote risk mitigation and pesticide safety, the very crux of an effective regulatory program. Second, it comes from this organization, AAPCO. You have clearly demonstrated that you can create and manage a complex regulatory system and enjoy the respect of your federal partners.

AAPSE's mission is to promote the highest standards of pesticide safety education. This means: -formulating reasoned and practical pesticide program policies, -developing effective training methods, and - promoting the professional development of our members. Last fall we began developing a strategic plan. The draft strategic plan has five rocks or goals and many bits of gravel, sand and water, which serve as the objectives. Let me focus on the highlights. Our first goal is to strengthen AAPSE. AAPSE needs to meet the needs of its membership by promoting educational opportunities, an electronic journal, and the exchange of ideas and materials related to pesticide safety training and education.

AAPSE needs to expand its membership to include all state extension, EPA and State Lead Agency staff responsible for pesticide education, training and certification programs. Last year we saw a substantial increase in EPA and SLA membership. Partly as a result, I am recommending that we amend our governing documents to give full membership to our regulatory members. Brian Swingle, who serves as AAPCO's liaison to AAPSE, has been asked to serve on the By-Laws Committee.

We can also strengthen ourselves by creating formal working relationships with industry, foundations, commodity organizations and professional associations interested in supporting pesticide stewardship programs.

Our second goal is to promote a grants program for environmental stewardship, which I see as pesticide education, safety and risk mitigation. EPA's Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program (PESP) is currently administered by the Wallace Foundation. Why shouldn't AAPSE be the administrator? We have members in every state and are committed to pesticide environmental stewardship. Last October AAPSE became a PESP Supporter. No other professional association is more dedicated than we are to supporting educational programs that will reduce pesticide-related risks to humans and the environment. We look forward to working with EPA and other PESP participants.

I also think that part of the grants program should be funded through EPA's Supplemental Environmental Projects program. We need to offer our services to EPA and to those who choose to develop Supplemental Environmental Projects resulting from pesticide misuse. Such a partnership offers a win-win-win situation. Our third rock, or goal, is to promote other human health and safety programs related to pesticide use. We need to establish partnerships with organizations representing health care providers and farmworker advocates.

We need to support and maintain the active involvement of our members in agromedicine and agriculture health and safety programs. Our fourth goal is to provide expert advice to USDA and EPA on matters related to pesticide safety and risk mitigation. The Certification and Training Assessment Group (CTAG) was created, in part, to provide advice and guidance to the two agencies and their state partners. The CTAG report has been released and is available on AAPSE's home page. The CTAG is developing a strategic plan to implement its proposals, meaning that it's existence will be required for some time. CTAG should become to AAPSE what SFIREG is to AAPCO, a permanent committee to

provide feedback, advice, and implementation strategies for issues of concern to its members and their organizations.

Our fifth and final goal is to establish regional Pesticide Safety Education Centers at three Land Grant institutions. Among other things, these centers will train pesticide safety trainers and regulatory personnel responsible for pesticide applicator training and certification programs.

Last summer I began working on a proposal to conduct a feasibility study aimed at accomplishing this goal. I am pleased to report that AAPSE has been informed that the proposal will receive financial support from the American Crop Protection Association, the Environmental Protection Agency and the University of California's NIH funded Agricultural Health and Safety Program. In addition, the Agriculture Retailer's Association and the Armed Forces Pest Management Board have agreed to provide in-kind support. The feasibility study should be completed before the National Pesticide Applicator Certification and Training Workshop in Portland, Maine in August.

I would like to emphasize that the Strategic Plan is only a draft. It has not been formally reviewed by our Strategic Planning Committee or our members. When it is, I suspect that their comments will do much to improve it. I will admit that when I assumed the presidency of AAPSE, I didn't have any idea, which rocks to add to the jar. Perhaps the Strategic Planning Committee will add additional rocks or change the ones that I've suggested.

Earlier, I mentioned that one of our goals was to provide advice to USDA and EPA about issues related to pesticide risk mitigation. Three weeks ago Consumers Union (CU) issued a report urging EPA to remove certain products from the market because of their potential for adversely affecting infants and children. CU developed a theoretical "Toxicity Index" for many important pesticides based on data provided by USDA's Pesticide Residue Data program. The toxicity index was based on the acute and chronic toxicity indices, both of which relied on the mean pesticide residue levels. However, CU's mean residue levels only included figures from detectable residues. The actual mean residue level was probably much lower, since some samples undoubtedly had residues below the level of detection.

For example, in 1997, USDA screened 614 pear samples for parathion and found detectable residues in four, ranging from 0.003 to 0.31 ppm. If only 10 percent of the 614 samples had been treated with parathion, then 57 samples had less than the level of detection. If these "non-detects" had been included in CU's calculations, the mean residue levels used to compute the toxicity indices would have been dramatically lower. As a result the CU's toxicity index grossly overestimates risk. What has this got to do with applicator training and certification? Well, if 57 pear growers can produce a crop without detectable residues, perhaps the other four can, too. The difference between samples with detectable residues and those without could be due to the applicator's competencies, the weather, varietal differences or some combination of the three. We can't do much about the weather or varietal differences but we can do something about the competency of applicators. We can provide better, more comprehensive training and use exams better designed to measure competencies. The bottom line is that instead of taking regulatory action based on questionable assumptions, perhaps EPA and USDA should focus on reducing the mean residue values by promoting better training and certification programs, after all, the applicator is ultimately responsible for most of the residues. I bring this issue up because later in this meeting EPA will update you on FQPA.

For the last two and a half years much of their efforts have been focused on the science behind Monte Carlo, the use of an extra 10X safety factor, common mechanisms of action, and on aggregate and accumulative exposures. EPA is dealing with difficult and complicated regulatory and scientific issues. For its part, USDA is supporting crop profiles, residue testing, development of non-chemical alternatives, more minor use registrations, and sustainable agriculture (read no pesticides). While all of these efforts are important, I am suggesting that EPA and USDA also consider the importance of training the people responsible for deciding if they need to use a pesticide and, if so, which one, how

much and how, when and where will it be applied.

Earlier, I mentioned that I was impressed with the tremendous opportunities that exist to work together. AAPSE is in the process of identifying which rocks it will put in the jar. I urge industry and our federal partners not to overlook an opportunity to involve extension pesticide educators and state pesticide certification managers in implementing FQPA. Help us decide which rocks, gravel and sand should be in the mix.

It has been a pleasure to share my thoughts with you on the importance of training and to update you on AAPSE's activities and plans.

Thank you very much.

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