

PREFACE

This report is the latest in a series of analytical, policy-oriented studies related to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's implementation of the Food Quality Protection Act, produced by Consumers Union through our FQPA project.

For past reports, see our project web site, <http://www.ecologic-ipm.com>.

The Food Quality Protection Act of 1996 was probably the most important environmental legislation enacted during the 1990s. It markedly strengthened the safety standards that govern exposure to pesticides, elevated public-health protection to top priority in trading off health risk against benefits of chemical use, and made protecting vulnerable groups—especially infants and children—the explicit goal of Federal pesticide regulation.

Now, as the Clinton Administration leaves office, we have surveyed the progress EPA has made in the four years since the FQPA became law. The promise of enhanced public health protection through reduced exposure to pesticides has begun to be realized—but just barely begun. EPA has moved slowly and deliberately, choosing its steps with a lot of care, as it implements the FQPA. Recent decisions have eliminated some of the most obvious, largest risks posed by pesticides used around the home, and by dietary residues. These few initial steps have moderately reduced overall risk. But a great deal more work remains, and reducing risk farther will be more difficult, requiring decisions on a greater number of uses of many more chemicals that each contribute smaller, but collectively important, fractions of overall risk. As our earlier reports have, this one describes the relative risks of different pesticide uses in detail, mapping out priorities for future EPA attention.

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