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Minnesota Becomes First State to Ban Toxic Antibacterial Pesticide

Washington, DC, May 23, 2014 – Minnesota became the first state in the nation this month to completely ban the toxic antibacterial pesticide from statewide sale in personal care cleaning products. This ban comes as several large manufacturers have committed to removing triclosan from their products, and as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), after decades of inaction, now vows to review the safety and efficacy claims of the chemical.

“Minnesota has proven itself a leader in protecting its citizens from the dangers of triclosan. Hopefully, this will encourage other states to move forward with similar legislation, given government inaction and the current market shift away from this hazardous and pervasive chemical,” said Jay Feldman, executive director, Beyond Pesticides.

The new legislation states “no person shall offer for retail sale in Minnesota any cleaning product that contains triclosan and is used by consumers for sanitizing or hand and body cleansing,” and will take effect on January 2017. Last year, Minnesota state agencies, including schools, were ordered to stop procuring products that contain triclosan. This, as recent studies continue to show that it accumulates in lakes and rivers across Minnesota, including Lake Superior, persisting in sediment and fish.

Last year, FDA required manufacturers to prove that their antibacterial soaps are safe and effective against bacteria, as product label claims stipulate. Public pressure, led by Beyond Pesticides and other groups, has contributed to a growing awareness of the dangers of triclosan’s use. As a result, several major manufacturers have already taken steps to exclude the chemical. Johnson and Johnson and Proctor and Gamble both publicly stated they will phase out triclosan from their products, while Colgate-Palmolive reformulated its popular line of liquid soaps, but continues to formulate Total® toothpaste with triclosan.

For over 30 years, triclosan dominated the marketplace in hundreds of consumer products ranging from antibacterial soaps, deodorants, toothpastes, cosmetics, fabrics, and even toys. Triclosan’s success has been aided by a public perception that antibacterial products protect against harmful bacteria; however, studies conclude that antibacterial soaps show no health benefits over plain soaps. Studies find that triclosan has endocrine disrupting properties, may interfere with fetal development, accumulates in breast milk and other fatty tissues, contributes to bacterial and antibiotic resistance, and contaminates waterways and aquatic

wildlife. Meanwhile, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports triclosan to be present in the urine of 75% of the U.S. population, with concentrations that have increased by 50% since 2004.

Since 2004, Beyond Pesticides has worked to bring public attention to the dangers surrounding the proliferate use of triclosan in consumer goods. A petition submitted to both FDA and EPA by Beyond Pesticides in 2010 calls for the ban on triclosan based on the health and environmental risks from its use, and given the availability of safer alternatives.

For more information, see Beyond Pesticides' Triclosan webpage: <http://bit.ly/BPTRiclosan>.

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