

# Get the Cancerous Pesticides Out of Our Food

To the Editor:

In "A Trace of Pesticide, an Accepted Risk" (The Week in Review, Feb. 7), responding to the list of 35 carcinogenic pesticides in foods announced by the Environmental Protection Agency, you miss some simple facts.

- Cancer-causing pesticides can be replaced by alternative pest management practices. As one of many examples, soybean growers in Practical Farmers of Iowa have replaced the cancer-causing herbicide alachlor with tillage systems and planting techniques to shade out weeds.

They eliminated one of the 35 E.P.A.-listed pesticides, while maintaining productivity and profitability — a yield of 44.3 bushels per acre, compared with the statewide average of 39 bushels per acre on chemically treated fields, and a saving of \$7 an acre. Similar results are seen in corn.

- The National Academy of Sciences proposal to replace a ban on cancer-causing pesticides (under the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act) with a "negligible risk" standard is not based on an individual's total dietary intake of all cancer-causing pesticides. Eleven of the E.P.A.'s 35 carcinogenic pesticides are registered for use on apples, 10 on grapes. Assessing the risk from a piece of fruit, a plate of food and three meals a day is beyond the grasp of the proposal.

Worse, no account is taken of the risk of nondietary exposure to the same carcinogenic pesticides, widely used on lawns, in parks and schoolyards, or the risk to sensitive groups like children and the elderly.

- Chemical-intensive agriculture is costly to consumers. What we don't pay at the grocery store, we pay in health and pollution costs, and losses to farmers caused by pest resistance to pesticides — all to the tune of \$8 billion a year, according to Cornell University researchers.

There is no good proven reason to feed the American public carcinogens when we could be weaning agriculture from its chemical fix. Let's get on with the business of phasing out carcinogens and stop rationaliz-

ing these unnecessary and dangerous practices.

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