

Proposed APVMA chemical reconsideration outcome for Paraquat

- The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) released the proposed regulatory decision for the chemical reconsideration of paraquat on 30 July 2024.
- The proposed regulatory decision follows an APVMA review of paraquat.
- The APVMA proposed regulatory decision will be released for public consultation for three months closing 29 October 2024.
- Paraquat is a non-selective contact herbicide belonging to the bipyridinium class of compounds which also includes the herbicide diquat. Paraquat and diquat have been registered for use in Australia since 1964.
- Paraquat is an active constituent in 141 agricultural chemical products currently registered for use in Australia by the APVMA.
- There are 92 products containing paraquat as the only active constituent with a concentration ranging from 200 - 360 g/L paraquat. There are also 45 registered products combining with diquat as a second active constituent and 4 products containing paraquat and amitrole.
- Paraquat products are used as herbicides against broadleaf and grass weeds in a variety of situations, including treatment of weeds in seed beds before sowing, post-emergence inter-row weed control and pre-harvesting operations of numerous crops.
- Paraquat is also used as a crop desiccant, for hay freezing, accelerating the drying of seeds and desiccating weeds to facilitate crop harvesting.
- The fundamental issues identified in the proposed regulatory decision are the unacceptable environmental risks associated with uses on the current approved labels.
- The proposed regulatory decision recommends the deletion of label instructions (and where relevant, registration of products) on paraquat uses except those limited to weed control in rice, peanuts and fallow establishment for field crops.
- Weed control in banana crops will also be supported but limited to spot spraying only.
- Combination products containing paraquat and diquat as an aid to cultivation in fallow (full disturbance only) have been supported.
- Uses in sugar cane, cotton, fruit orchards, vineyards, pastures including lucerne, potatoes, vegetables, and as a pre-harvest crop desiccant will be removed.
- The proposed regulatory decision also introduces a user requirement on product labels that all broadacre spraying equipment must have an enclosed cabin.
- If the APVMA's final regulatory decision (after the public consultation period) removes the above listed uses, as proposed, it may have an impact on many agricultural industries in Queensland, including sugar cane, horticulture and broad acre cropping. It is unsure at this stage what alternative chemical products will be available that can replace paraquat products in these situations.