

Grower Requested Own Use (GROU) pesticide program available for farmers



By Lilian Schaer, Executive Director, AGCare

The cost of farm inputs continues to rise, especially for crop protection products. Ontario farmers are subject to an average price differential of 59% on the most common pesticide protection products compared to our counterparts in nearby US states, according to a recent survey by the University of Guelph Ridgetown Campus.

AGCare's Board strongly believes that Ontario farmers should have access to agricultural inputs at prices that are competitive with what our southern neighbours pay. Through AGCare, farm organizations have been working with the federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) to allow freer movement of key crop protection products between Canada and the US as a way of increasing price discipline and promoting awareness of the need for competitive pricing.

The PMRA launched the Grower Requested Own Use (GROU) program in 2007 as a replacement for the Own Use Import (OUI) program. GROU allows farmers to import the US version of a crop protection product registered in Canada for their own use, should that product be available in the US for a lower price than here at home.

Products must be approved by PMRA for inclusion in the GROU program before they are eligible to be brought across the border. Currently, there are twelve products on the GROU list, and PMRA has asked for nominations so that they may expand the list for next year's growing season. AGCare has submitted a list of all nominations on behalf of growers to PMRA and the nomination committee will meet to review products on October 23. In order to import products under GROU, growers must apply to PMRA for a GROU import certificate for each product they wish to bring in.

AGCare has met with the PMRA to express concern about some of the GROU program's early challenges and PMRA has committed to performing a program evaluation to determine GROU's progress in meeting its objectives.

Two fundamental cornerstones for the GROU program to be successful are that there need to be enough products available for import and growers must make use of the program.

Information on how to use the GROU program is also available at: http://www.pmr-arla.gc.ca/english/appregis/grou/grou_imp-e.html.

AGCare is also developing a how-to guide for farmers wishing to use the program that will be ready later this fall and posted on this website.