Pest management policy created by Bergland

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland has announced a new department "integrated pest management" policy to effectively control pests with minimum adverse effect on man, wildlife and the environment.

The policy, in the form of a secretary's memorandum, says the department will "develop, practice and encourage the use of integrated pest management methods that are practical, effective and energy-efficient."

Specifically, the secretary pledged to conduct and support cooperative research on resistant crops and livestock, beneficial organisms, cultural practices and selective biological and chemical pesticides as well as other innovative methods that are proven or potentially effective in controlling pests.

The policy statement calls for cooperative projects to demonstrate the latest in pest management technology to all pesticides users, from homeowners to farmers.

"This policy announcement means we will be placing increased emphasis on controlling significant pest populations with biological and other natural controls as well as with selective chemical pesticides," Secretary Bergland said.

However, he added, the policy "should not be interpreted as a move to eliminate the use of the pesticides that U.S. agriculture is dependent upon, because pesticides are part of the integrated pest management approach.

"The policy statement should be seen as an increased concern by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the health and well-being of all Americans and for the ecosystem of which we are a part."

Since World War II, a revolution in chemical technology has made normally bountiful U.S. farms even more bountiful, with hundreds of chemicals used to increase productivity, protect crops and cut labor needs, he said.

"But, in using these advances, we did not give enough thought to the eventual consequences to the environment and to people," the secretary said.

"As President Carter told Congress in his message on the environment last May, 'Americans long thought that nature could take care of itself, or–that if it did not -- the consequences were someone else's problem. As we know now, that assumption was wrong: none of us is a stranger to environmental problems.'"

Secretary Bergland said the new policy is the department's effort to correct those problems "in the most responsible way possible."

The department will be guided by this new domestic policy in working with other countries on pest management, the secretary said.

The Work Group on Pest Management; representing 11 agencies of the department, will advise the secretary on ways to implement the new policy.