

# Need for product development stressed

ATLANTA, Ga. — As the world population continues to explode, U.S. agriculture stands at the threshold of an era calling for accelerated efforts to hasten the advancement of agricultural technology.

This is the optimistic outlook offered by Karl Voepel, Vice President and General Manager of the Agricultural Chemicals Division of Mobay Chemical Corporation.

"Statisticians tell us that world population growth in the next 50 years will create a demand for more food and fiber than has previously been produced during the entire history of mankind," said Voepel. "The FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) has estimated that just to feed the world by the year 2000 will require worldwide farm yield increases of 60 percent per acre, a 26 percent increase in planted acres, and a 14 percent improvement in intensified crop sequences.

"As the world's most efficient producer of food and fiber, U.S. agriculture stands to gain a disproportionate share of this dramatic increase in demand. But in order to do so, our agricultural industry must achieve renewed support from the public and from our government and its agencies."

Development threatened  
Voepel, who also serves as Vice

Chairman for the National Agricultural Chemicals Association, pointed out that the introduction of crop protection chemicals has made a major contribution to the current productivity of American agriculture. However, the future development of even more effective and environmentally acceptable pesticide products is now threatened by staggering investments in research and development, by ineffective regulatory agencies, by myopic environmental groups, and by outdated patent laws.

"Today, a company such as ours must synthesize and screen between 10,000 and 20,000 different chemicals in order to identify one marketable compound," Voepel explained. "Then, the company must next invest an average of ten years in development, testing and probing before that product can achieve registration for commercial use in this country. The research costs alone for this undertaking amount to more than \$30 million, not considering additional investments in manufacturing facilities, marketing activities and administration."

Despite these hurdles, said Voepel, the pesticide industry has continued to make giant strides forward in the development of highly effective, environmentally acceptable crop protection

materials. Among them have been the introduction of first, second and even third-generation Pyrethroid insecticides, new herbicides, and unique systemic fungicides such as Mobay's Bayleton, all of which are applied at remarkably low rates of only ounces per acre.

### New definition of ag

"If the economic and political climate allows, we expect to see even more revolutionary crop protection developments in the decade ahead," Voepel continued.

"The relatively new science of bio-technology will ultimately open the doors to an entirely new definition of agriculture, with staggering implications for modifying the very composition of a plant. Other far-ranging research activities are taking place in such areas as interdisciplinary chemical and biological research. Insect neuro-peptides and juvenile hormone antagonists represent two areas which may produce new and

environmentally desirable insecticides."

Continued development of such imaginative technology, Voepel emphasized, hinges on two key prerequisites. The first is a continuing commitment from a company to invest an average of \$30 million each year to develop new products that cannot be marketed for ten additional years. The second is the assurance that the considerable investment in such research is protected.

"We in the pesticide industry believe that the research data we generate during the development of a new product, and which we are required to disclose in full to the EPA in order to receive product registration, is our intellectual property," he explained. "As such, that data cannot and should not be used by the EPA to support the registrations of competitive products, nor should it be made available to competing companies. During the years before a company can actually begin marketing

a new product, that data represents the sum total of the several years and tens of millions of dollars invested in its development.

"At present, unfortunately, the EPA continues to disagree with this industry position. As a result, several chemical companies are now battling the EPA over this issue in the courts."

Voepel noted that the pesticide industry's greatest concern is the misuse of such data. "Our objective is not to hide such information, since by law we are committed to disclose all data to the EPA, both good and bad. Rather, we're trying to preserve our incentive to make these massive investments in time and money.

"Unfortunately, several public issues have seriously impaired the EPA's credibility and image in the recent past. If the agency's credibility remains impaired, and if environmental groups continue to insist on reviewing this industry's confidential data, I would propose a scientific body of auditors,

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