Pesticide legislation in New Zealand

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I. Introduction

During the last decade considerable attention throughout the world has been given to pesticide residues in foodstuffs. In some countries policies have been adopted of phasing out some types of persistent pesticides and reducing the tolerances in foods to a minimum. Since the economy of New Zealand is largely dependent on the export of butter, cheese, and meat, the production of which in-

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volves the use of pesticides, there has been concern that the residues of these pesticides should not exceed the tolerances in the importing countries. Consequently, the permitted uses of pesticides in New Zealand, particularly organochlorine insecticides, have been frequently reviewed and there have been many amendments of the relevant legislation, some of which had been in force for a number of years.

Unlike that of some countries, pesticide legislation in New Zealand is not consolidated in one ordinance. Largely for historical reasons several different Acts of Parliament are involved. The New Zealand legislation also differs from that of many other countries in that the control of the use of pesticides is to a large extent the responsibility of non-government boards. An Agricultural Chemicals Board, which registers and controls the use of pesticides used in plant protection, was established by the Agricultural Chemicals Act of 1959. Similarly, the Animal Remedies Board, which operates under the Animal Remedies Act of 1967, controls the manufacture, importation, sale, and use of drugs, medicines, remedies, and other therapeutic substances used for treating and preventing animal diseases. Although there are government nominees on each board, the non-government members are in the majority. The boards operate independently of government but within the provisions of the relevant Acts of Parliament, regulations, and notices. They report to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

In some instances progressively more restrictive legislation has been introduced over a period of years. In other instances the current legislation which bears a recent date consolidates and revokes ordinances which had been introduced many years previously. Thus the date of the current legislation does not necessarily indicate when the restrictions were first introduced.

During the period 1961–70 a number of regulations were introduced to restrict the use of organochlorine insecticides. These pesticides have now been largely phased out of use in agriculture. Consequently there has been more widespread use of toxic organophosphate insecticides. This has resulted in recent legislation relating to the safe use of particular toxic chemicals.

The labelling and use of the pesticides controlled by the two boards has to conform with other legislation which applies to toxic chemicals in general, irrespective of whether they are used in agriculture, industry, or pharmacy, and which is designed to safeguard the health of people.

1 Chemical names of pesticides mentioned in text are given in Table I.
2 Copies of the Acts, regulations, and notices referred to may be obtained for a small charge from the Government Bookshops in Wellington and other principal cities in New Zealand.
3 The titles of the current relevant documents are given in the references section.