

EMPHASIS ON THE WORD *ILLEGAL*

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The recent killing of bees in the Constantia area of the Western Cape has received widespread media coverage, and rightfully so. The bees, reportedly in the millions, were lethally affected by an illegal mixture of a Fipronil based pesticide with molasses, intended to control ants.

It might be easy to overlook the word *illegal* in the abovementioned sentence, especially when elements such as *millions of dead bees* tend to carry much greater emotional and attention-grabbing weight, however this is a fundamental aspect of pesticide use that is often disregarded. For those who may not know, the application of any pesticide, whether commercial or household, must follow the label instructions to the tee. The off-label use, as well as the acquisition, disposal or sale of an agricultural remedy for a purpose or in a manner other than that specified on the label is illegal as per Regulation No. R1716 of 26 July 1991 under Act No. 36 of 1947.

Pesticides are registered under the Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act, 1947 (Act No. 36 of 1947) after a rigorous review of the product's toxicology. For public peace of mind, it must also be noted that a product is only registered once comprehensive efficacy, residue, stability and plant compatibility studies have been submitted, reviewed and approved. Only once the Registrar of Act No. 36 of 1947 is satisfied that the label directed use of the product will not pose an unacceptable risk to human and environmental health, will registration be granted.

It goes without saying that there is a very good reason that these agricultural remedies, which are crucial for effective agricultural production, must comply with such rigorous standards, including specific directions for use, as non-compliance can have severe adverse effects on human or environmental health, as is evident in the recent bee mortality in the Western Cape.

CropLife South Africa will use all the avenues at its disposal to eradicate off-label recommendations, sales and use of pesticides as it not only jeopardises human and environmental health but also compromises food safety. To this end, CropLife drives arguably one of the most powerful agricultural information tools currently available, AgriIntel, which contains the label information of every single registered agricultural remedy in South Africa. It is strongly advisable for anyone involved in the application or sale of agricultural remedies to consult the website www.agri-intel.com so as to validate the label information.

It must be emphasised that each participant in the agricultural value chain, from researcher to consumer, has a responsibility and part to play in environmental stewardship. We urge members of the public to get in touch with CropLife South Africa, should they have any concerns in this regard.

For media inquiries, please contact:

Name: Elriza Theron

Position: Marketing and Communications Manager

CropLife South Africa

Tel: 072 443 3067

Email: elriza@croplife.co.za

Note to Editor:

CropLife South Africa is the voice of the South African plant science industry. It champions the role of agricultural innovations in crop protection and plant biotechnology in supporting and advancing sustainable agriculture; helping farmers feed a growing population while looking after the planet; and progressing rural communities. The world needs farmers, and farmers need plant science. CropLife South Africa is proud to be at the heart of helping farmers grow.