

## ***FOCUS ON AGRICULTURE***

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American Farm Bureau Federation

### **Regulatory Overreach: Dose Makes the Poison**

*By John Hart*

A 16<sup>th</sup> century physician who came to be known as Paracelsus is quoted as saying, “All substances are poisons; there is none which is not a poison. The right dose differentiates a poison from a remedy.”

This proverb is the basis for the familiar term used by toxicologists: “Dose makes the poison.” Paracelsus’ point was this: any chemical can be harmless or even beneficial at low concentrations, but poisonous at higher levels. Regulators would be well advised to remember this concept. Too much of anything usually ends up with bad results.

The Environmental Protection Agency serves a vital mission in ensuring the safety of the air we breathe and the water we drink. Regulations from EPA in the right dosage help protect our nation’s precious natural resources. However, there is growing concern across the countryside that EPA is going too far. Many fear that EPA, in its zeal, will further cripple an already fragile economy. A heavier dose of EPA regulations could well poison America’s prosperity. And when prosperity suffers, so does the ability to protect natural resources.

EPA’s reach has expanded significantly during the current administration. The agency’s budget is more than \$10 billion – the highest it’s ever been – and EPA employs more than 17,000 people nationwide. America’s farmers and ranchers fear EPA’s complex maze of rules and regulations will drive up their costs and make it more difficult to compete in a global marketplace.

EPA has introduced massive new air and water regulations that will do little to help the environment but will create a paperwork nightmare for farmers and ranchers. Nebraska Farm Bureau President Keith Olsen expressed the frustration felt by many when he lamented that EPA officials fail to recognize that farmers and ranchers are America’s original environmentalists because their livelihoods depend on high-quality air, water and soil.

“The list of new regulations and requirements is long and extensive. While we understand the desire and charge of EPA to protect the environment, this collection of EPA actions represents an agency that is, quite frankly, out of control,” Olsen said.

EPA's new Clean Water Act requirements for pesticide applications are just one onerous regulation that will hit American agriculture hard. And, EPA's decision to regulate greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act is likely to have serious consequences throughout the economy, according to the Office of Management and Budget. Proposed EPA revisions to coarse particulate or dust standards may trigger restrictions on everything from gravel roads to farm field activities.

A congressional solution is required to reign in EPA. Farm Bureau supports a number of bills to temper EPA that need to be passed, if possible, during the lame-duck session of Congress, but a priority of the next Congress must be to loosen the iron grip of EPA on our economy and entrepreneurial spirit.

Dose makes the poison. Federal regulations in the right amount protect the lives and livelihoods of all citizens, but if the regulatory zeal of EPA is left unchecked, the entire nation, not just American agriculture, will pay the price.