SHARING SCIENCE-BACKED MRL INFO IS KEY PART OF KEEPING PULSE MARKETS OPEN

Growers rely on scientific testing and expert interpretation of those results to keep their crops safe from pests and keep international markets open for their crops.

"Growers can't be expected to know what MRLs are in Canada or in export markets," said Greg Bartley, Pulse Canada's Director of Crop Protection. "They don't see it on the product label, so that's where we come in as a commodity association – Pulse Canada, but also the Keep It Clean program - so that growers know when a product could cause problems in an export market."

The MRL (maximum residue limit) is the highest amount of pesticide residue that you can expect to remain on a food crop when applied according to label instructions. A pesticide product is registered in Canada based on residue trials by the product registrant which are conducted according to very strict guidelines, Bartley noted.

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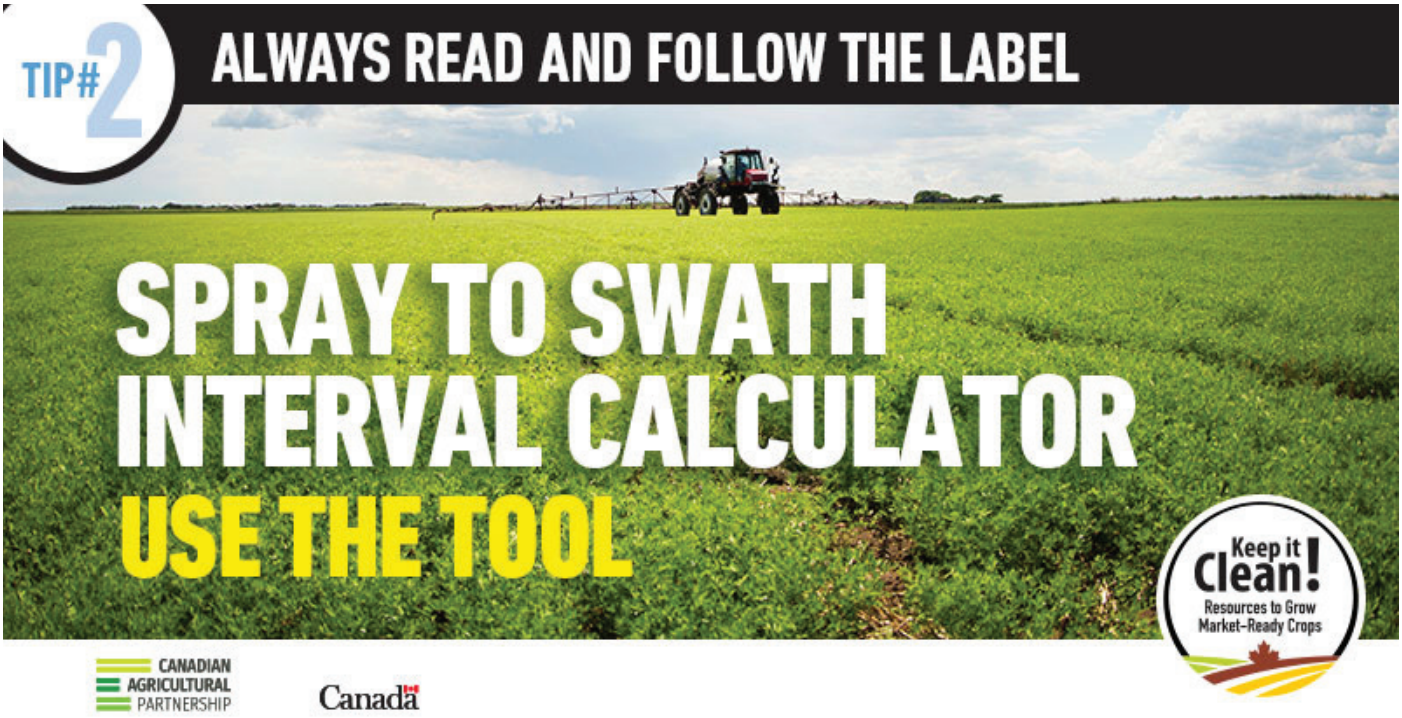

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The residue trials establish the maximum amount of residue based on maximum use patterns - maximum number of applications, highest application rate, and tightest pre-harvest interval.

"When a grower uses a pest control product according to label directions, we know that the residues will fall below that maximum level because typically growers aren't applying a product to the maximum specification," Bartley explained. "It's always important for growers to follow the label directions because they have residue implications."

Although there are MRLs established here in Canada, when Canadian crops are exported, it's the MRL in that export market that must be met by Canadian farmers.

"The important thing is that MRLs are not always consistent across export markets – sometimes they're higher, sometimes they're lower, and sometimes there are no established MRLs at all - that's what can cause a trade problem," Bartley pointed out. "If we have a product registered in Canada, there are no export market MRLs, and we detect a residue on that product, then it can potentially be non-compliant and cargo can be rejected. That's a situation we want to avoid."

Pulse Canada, Canola Council of Canada and Cereals Canada provide a grower advisory each year as part of the Keep It Clean program. Every fall, representatives of the full value chain (farmers, exporters, ag retailers) gather to assess the market risk for crop protection products based on the Canada Grains Council policy to determine if the product should appear on the advisory. That information is then communicated to growers through the Keep It Clean program (keepitclean.ca). Bartley recommends that growers check back with the advisory throughout the growing season in case there are any updates.

Participating in the grower advisory for MRLs through its national organization is one of several areas that Alberta Pulse Growers is involved in to ensure that farmers have access to the crop protection products that they need.

The Prairie Pesticide Minor Use Consortium (PPMUC) provides another avenue to get a product registered. A good example is lupin, a minor use crop with low acres so it is not in the interest of a registrant or company to invest the necessary research to go in a residue study to get that product registered. PPMUC is a consortium to move minor use priorities into the minor use process in Canada. If a product is identified as having tolerance, efficacy and potentially a good fit to be registered, but it doesn't have the residue data to get it registered, it can be nominated through the minor use process. The Pest Management Centre will then develop the residue data to get that product registered and that allows the growers access to that product to use on their farm.

Meanwhile, the Alberta Wetland Stewardship Project develops real world data that the PMRA can utilize in its risk assessment instead of relying on model data in order to maintain access to products. Learn more about this and other research projects at albertapulse.com.