

tremendous deterioration in the public health of society, create significant harm to a wide variety of agricultural enterprises, and lead to enormous rates of hunger and starvation throughout the world. Among its many adverse effects, a ban would reduce the yield of a large number of vegetable and fruit crops such as tomatoes, peppers, tree fruits, nuts, grapes, and strawberries. It has been calculated that the ban of methyl bromide would increase the cost of food to the U.S. consumer by a whopping \$46.7 billion annually.

It will also have serious effects on the environment, since the ban would require a significant increase in the use of other fertilizers and pesticides that pose significant groundwater and surface water contamination problems.

Environmentalist lies

Methyl bromide is a simple molecule, composed of one carbon atom, three hydrogen atoms, and one bromine atom. It is the bromine atom that environmentalists blame for dastardly actions against atmospheric ozone. Supposedly, bromine is much more effective than the chlorine in CFCs at depleting the ozone layer. If that were the case, however, then nature would be suicidal. The fact is that the vast majority of the bromine present in the atmosphere is produced by natural sources. Bromine is a common element in seawater (65 parts per million) and potassium salts, and also has been

detected in some freshwater systems such as swamps and peat bogs. Most methyl bromide is contributed by marine algae.

One of the most interesting facts of this scandal is that methyl bromide was not even considered an ozone depleter a year and a half ago. It has gone from being a chemical that posed no threat to the ozone layer, to a chemical that allegedly accounts for between 10 and 20% of ozone depletion. There is something clearly wrong here.

The first time methyl bromide was even mentioned as an ozone depleter was in a report issued by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) at the end of last year. Most amazing, the subject of methyl bromide was not even discussed during the UNEP meeting which was the basis for the report. Essentially, methyl bromide appeared out of nowhere in the report, and while the report's assertions had not even been peer-reviewed by scientists before publication.

As if on cue, however, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), and the Friends of the Earth (FOE), came out with a report on Dec. 3, 1991, calling for a total ban on methyl bromide by 1993. Of great interest is the fact that the report was presented at the International CFC and Halon Alternatives Conference in Baltimore, Maryland on Dec. 5: The presentation of this radical environmentalist report had the support of

EPA challenged about methyl bromide lies

Leading environmentalist organizations and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator William K. Reilly held back-to-back press conferences on Nov. 12 on accelerating the timetable for a worldwide ban on methyl bromide. A reporter from *21st Century Science & Technology* temporarily broke through their controlled environment by asking two simple questions:

1) Given that the worst-case scenario for ozone depletion is a 5% reduction in global ozone within 60 to 75 years—that is, the equivalent in increased ultraviolet exposure of moving from Washington, D.C. to Richmond, Virginia—how can you justify risking the entire world's food supply in a time of worldwide hunger and starvation, for no proven gain?

2) Did anyone in the preparation of your position papers calculate the losses to the world food supplies from banning methyl bromide? Preliminary calculations by *21st Century* staff show a cost of at least \$46

billion per year to the U.S. consumer and the loss of perhaps 5 to 10 million or more lives, mostly in the Third World nations.

Reilly feebly answered that his agency's "risk assessment" has determined that 70-90,000 deaths from skin cancers in the U.S. would be associated with the continued use of "ozone-depleting chemicals." It was pointed out to him, on dermatologic authority, that basal cell carcinoma (a skin disorder, not really a cancer) associated with over-exposure to UV radiation, is rarely life-threatening and is routinely treated in a doctor's office by a single application of a cotton swab soaked in liquid nitrogen. Malignant melanoma, which is a life-threatening skin cancer, has no proven association with UV exposure. Starvation, on the other hand, is deadly.

Reilly's answer to the second question was equally weak, bemoaning the difficulties the Third World faces in obtaining funding to phase out ozone-depleting chemicals. The *21st Century* reporter rejoined: "In other words, Mr. Reilly, the answer is 'no,' the U.S. government has not made any attempt to calculate the losses to world food supplies, yet you insist on speeding up the ban of methyl bromide."

The next questioner was called.