



**US Composting
Council**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

COMPOSTING COUNCIL CALLS FOR MORATORIUM ON PERSISTENT
HERBICIDES.

(Bethesda, MD)

The US Composting Council is calling on the EPA to initiate a Special Review Process for a class of persistent herbicides damaging tomatoes, peas, and other garden plants as a result of contaminated compost. “We applaud EPA for promoting composting and its benefits, but there is a class of bio-persistent herbicides that are now jeopardizing this growing business,” stated Frank Franciosi, the Council’s President. “We hope EPA will protect the environment and stand by its commitment to composting by banning the sale of these types of persistent herbicides pending the outcome of a review.”

The herbicides, with names like clopyralid, picloram and aminocyclopyrachlor, and marketed under brand names like Confront®(Dow), Stinger®(Dow), and Imprelis®(DuPont), are used to control broadleaf weeds in hay fields, golf courses, right-of-ways and lawns. The problem is that they do not break down like most other herbicides. They remain present and active when the grass clippings, crop residuals or manures from animals fed treated hay are delivered to a compost facility. They persist through the heat and intensity of a commercial compost facility and remain active in the final compost product. Even at very low concentrations – in the parts per billion – these persistent herbicides may damage the gardens of unsuspecting users of the compost.

That is what happened in Chittenden County, Vermont, this spring. The Chittenden Solid Waste District (CSWD) recently invested \$2.3 million in a state-of-the-art facility. Now the District is spending almost \$1 million to buy back and compensate area gardeners and farmers who bought and used their compost, only to see their tomatoes, peas and other sensitive plants germinate poorly, or wither, distort and not produce.



Tomato showing effect of persistent herbicide damage

“I was so upset,” exclaimed Tom Moreau, manager of the CSWD facility, who used his compost on his own garden, only to see his tomatoes wither. “Green Mountain

Compost (the CSWD brand) is known for its high quality. We get 80% of our revenues from sales. It will take years for us to recover.”

Compost is valued by gardeners, landscapers, farmers and environmentalists for its ability to improve soil health, protect against water pollution and droughts, and help plants grow. Commercial-scale compost production has been growing over the past two decades as part of the movement to increase recycling, reduce landfilling, and create green jobs. EPA actively supports composting and offers numerous resources on its benefits.

“Manufacturers like Dow and DuPont have to do rigorous testing of chemicals to demonstrate that toxicity, carcinogenicity and other risks are acceptable before EPA will approve their use,” explained Michael Virga, USCC Executive Director. “We need to add compostability to that list. EPA said they would do that 10 years ago, when Washington and California banned clopyralid use on lawns. Clearly, Chittenden demonstrates that labeling is ineffective. We need EPA to take action now.”

To pressure the EPA to impose a moratorium on the use and sale of these herbicides pending the conclusion of the Special Review Process, the USCC has launched a grass roots campaign. “We invite anyone who shares our concerns to let the EPA know,” continued Virga. Information on the campaign can be found at <http://compostingcouncil.org/persistent-herbicides/>.

Established in 1990, the USCC is a professional and trade association dedicated to the development, expansion and promotion of the composting industry in the United States. For more information, go to www.compostingcouncil.org.

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