

MLRs FOR PINEAPPLE – ETHEPHON

Statement by Ecuador

The following communication, received on 30 April 2008, is being circulated at the request of the delegation of Ecuador.

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1. Ecuador would like to express its concern at the possible modification of the maximum residue levels (MRLs) for Ethephon in pineapple, in the context of possible reforms to existing European regulations on pesticides, contaminants and other substances currently being elaborated by the European Union's Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health – Section on Phytosanitary Products and Residues.
 2. Ethephon, a plant growth regulator used in a variety of crops, is an essential input, especially for pineapple producers who use it to promote fruit maturation and to enhance colour.
 3. Ecuador believes that the MRL values proposed as a result of the new revision by the European Communities could constitute an important non-tariff barrier to the importation of pineapples and other products. It considers that these values are not in line with those established at world level by other bodies and that there is no scientific evidence to support the establishment of the new acute reference dose (ARfD).
 4. Although the Health and Consumer Protection Directorate-General (SANCO) of the European Communities and Ecuador's own authorities, under the Ministry of Agriculture, have held talks on this area of concern, the European authorities have stated that, instead of the detection limit, the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health could be asked to impose a value of 0.5 mg/kg., as a toxicological limit which would entail no risk to health.
 5. However, it is pointed out that this would be an exceptional and temporary proposal pending the submission of field data and that it might not be accepted by the member States of the European Communities, since MRLs are normally established on the basis of field trial data.
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