

April 24, 1997

EPA-SAB-EC-LTR-97-006

Honorable Fred Hansen
Deputy Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
401 M Street, SW
Washington, DC 20460

Subject: Second Report from the Science Advisory Board (SAB)
Lookout Panel: Meeting with OPP managers

Dear Mr. Hansen:

The purpose of this letter is to summarize the third experiment of the SAB's Executive Committee in carrying out the function of a Lookout Panel for the Agency, in response to your July 1995 request. This experiment differed from the previous two experiments in that managers from within a program office supplied much of the expertise. Such an approach allows the program office to benefit in the lookout panel process, which is likely to provide much more benefit to the program than merely responding to the outputs of a panel. This approach seemed a particularly appropriate way of responding to your request that we serve as ambassadors to the Agency on futures and communicate enthusiasm for thinking about the future as the Agency goes about its business of protecting the public health and the environment. A summary of this discussion is contained in Attachment A.

We believe this has been the most successful of the experiments so far. The discussion was rich in ideas, most of which came from the program office participants in response to questions from the SAB members. Many of the issues raised could be recognized only by those with experience in the pesticide area. The one limitation of the approach is that it is probably not the best way to uncover issues that are truly "beyond the horizon". For that reason, we may wish to combine an approach similar to this with some other approaches that may be more oriented to

new, as yet unthought-of problems. However, we believe that the benefits of this approach are high and probably could not be attained by an approach designed specifically to elicit unthought-of issues. We recommend including some similar sessions in our ongoing lookout panel activities.

OPP participants in the discussion expressed a desire for some kind of follow-up to issues that were raised so that the deliberations would lead to some specific products. In response to this and in keeping with our mission to report environmental problems that may arise or increase in the future and their potential solution, we agreed to highlight a few issues in our report as deserving of special attention on the part of the Agency. The two issues, chosen by the OPP participants after the meeting, are:

1. Scenarios for the evaluation of ecological risk. This is a need which has already become apparent and is likely to grow. Relatively little is being done in this area, since the Food Quality Protection Act focuses mainly on issues associated with human health risk from direct exposure to pesticides.

2. Mechanisms and structures across Agencies to allow sharing of information. These are necessary to some extent to carry out the requirements of the Food Quality Protection Act. They are likely to become much more essential in the future as the need to do holistic assessments increases.

Sincerely,

/signed/

Dr. Genevieve Matanoski, Chair
Lookout Panel
Science Advisory Board

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