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U.S. Farmers Used 985 Million Pounds of Pesticides in 1997

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U.S. farmers used 985 million pounds of pesticides in crop production in 1997, according to a recent study by researchers at the National Center for Food and Agricultural Policy (NCFAP). The newly released study is an update of an earlier database issued by NCFAP for 1992. Both detail pesticide usage by crop, state and active ingredient. The NCFAP pesticide use databases are unique, publicly available, comprehensive accounts of pesticide use in the U.S. The 1992 and 1997 NCFAP databases are available on NCFAP's website: www.ncfap.org. Visitors to the website can access pesticide use data for any state, active ingredient, or crop for 1992 or 1997.

The 1997 database indicates that out of the 87 surveyed, one crop, field corn, accounts for 23% of U.S. pesticide use. Potatoes, citrus, soybeans and cotton round out the top five crops in terms of pounds of pesticides used. The states with the highest pesticide use were California and Florida, together accounting for about 27% of the pounds of pesticides used in U.S. crop production, with the states of Idaho, Iowa and Illinois rounding out the top five. The NCFAP database accounts for the use of 220 active ingredients, of which oil and sulfur rank highest in volume of use. The use of herbicides to kill weeds accounts for about one-half of the volume of pesticides used by U.S. farmers, while fungicides, for disease control, and insecticides combined account for one-third of the pounds used. A fourth category of other pesticides includes products used as crop defoliants, growth regulators and soil fumigants and accounts for the remaining one-sixth of national use.

The NCFAP database was assembled from publicly available reports issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and land grant universities. NCFAP collected additional estimates from extension service specialists, commodity organizations, food companies, crop consultants, state governmental agencies and agricultural chemical manufacturers.

A comparison between the 1992 and 1997 NCFAP databases indicates that total pounds used of herbicides, fungicides and other pesticides increased. If oil is excluded from the comparison, the total pounds of insecticide active ingredients used decreased. Overall, NCFAP estimates that U.S. farmers used 93 million pounds more of pesticides in 1997 than they had in 1992. A comprehensive accounting of the changes between the two years is contained in a separate NCFAP report (Trends in Pesticide Use: Comparing 1992 and 1997) available on NCFAP's website.

Preparation of the NCFAP national pesticide use database was supported financially by the Office of Pest Management Policy of the USDA.

TOP TEN USES OF PESTICIDES (1997)

Active Ingredients	Millions Lbs/Yr	Crops	Millions Lbs/Yr	States	Millions Lbs/Yr
1 Oil (I)	102	Corn	225	California	166
2 Sulfur (F)	78	Potatoes	111	Florida	105
3 Atrazine (H)	75	Citrus	86	Idaho	57
4 Metolachlor (H)	67	Soybeans	85	Iowa	56
5 Metam Sodium (O)	60	Cotton	76	Illinois	49
6 Sulfuric Acid (O)	48	Grapes	53	Texas	39
7 2,4-D (H)	41	Tobacco	27	Washington	38
8 1,3-D (O)	35	Tomatoes	27	N. Carolina	36
9 Glyphosate (H)	35	Wheat	26	Nebraska	36
10 Methyl Bromide (O)	33	Apples	24	Indiana	28

F = Fungicide, H = Herbicide, I = Insecticide, O = Other

Pesticide Use in U.S. Crop Production: 1997, by Leonard P. Gianessi and Monica B. Marcelli, Released November 2000. Available at www.ncfap.org