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Immediate Release

## **NEW DATA ON PESTICIDES IN FOOD SHOWS LEVELS AMONG LOWEST EVER, CONTRARY TO PUBLIC PERCEPTION**

TORONTO - If you've ever worried about trace amounts of pesticides on the fruits and vegetables you buy, you're not alone – but here's some good news:

A new analysis of government inspection data released today by Croplife Canada shows that the amount of pesticide residues found in foods sold in Canada is at its lowest level in years, with the vast majority of tested foods showing no detectable amounts at all.

Data compiled by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (an agency of the federal government) shows that more than 99% of fresh fruits, vegetables and other food products were found to be within the Maximum Residue Limits set by Health Canada. About 80% of all fresh food items inspected showed no detectable traces of pesticides at all – for processed foods, more than 90% had no detectable amounts.

But despite these impressive numbers, public perception about pesticides and food is very different. A recent survey of Canadian women (the chief household decision makers on matters related to food and nutrition) found 81% said they are concerned about pesticides being used to grow the fruits and vegetables they buy, with 77% believing pesticides used in agriculture are harmful to their health.\*

“There's a huge disconnect between perception and reality, and that's unfortunate because people are concerned about something that the government's own inspection data shows we really don't need to worry about,” said Peter MacLeod, Executive Director of Crop Protection Chemistry for CropLife Canada.

“Almost 100% of all foods sold in Canada, whether domestically grown or imported, are at or below the limit for trace amounts of pesticides established by Health Canada. People who are concerned about pesticides in food should be reassured by these findings, and should focus instead on ensuring that they eat a wide variety of fruits and vegetables every day for optimum health and to prevent disease.”

Comparisons with other leading agricultural nations show the amount of chemical pesticides used by Canadian farmers has been declining since 1980. Here in Ontario, farmers have cut their use of chemical pesticides by more than half (52%) over the last 20 years, according to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

A global analysis of the cost of food shows Canada's food prices to be among the most affordable in the world. Canadians spend an average of 11.7% of total income on food, compared to more than 50% in some developing nations.

MORE ...

\* National telephone survey of women age 18 or older conducted by Pollara Inc. in February, 2005. Results are considered accurate to within +/- 4.5%, 19 times out of 20.

## PESTICIDE RESIDUES IN FOOD SAMPLES

SOURCE: Adapted from Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), 2004

FOOD TYPES	NON-DETECTABLE	BELOW MRL	ABOVE MRL
Fresh Domestic	79.4%	19.9%	0.7%
Fresh Imported	80.7%	18.8%	0.5%
Processed Domestic	93.9%	6.1%	NIL
Processed Imported	97.5%	2.5%	0.3%

MRL = Maximum Residue Limit, set by Health Canada

### COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS YEARS' DATA

Samples at or below Maximum Residue Limit (MRL)

Fiscal Year	Fresh Domestic	Fresh Imported	Processed Domestic	Processed Imported
2003-04	99.29%	99.48%	100%	99.69%
2002-03	97.78%	99.01%	100%	100%
2001-02	97.61%	99.32%	100%	NA
2000-01	98.55%	99.61%	NA	100%
1999-00	98.69%	98.60%	100%	NA
1998-99	98.23%	97.33%	100%	100%
1997-98	98.43%	97.91%	99.70%	99.76%

SOURCE: Adapted from Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), 2004

About Maximum Residue Limits: Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) and Allowable Daily Intake (ADI) levels are established by Health Canada. As an example, for a particular pesticide commonly used in farming, an average-weight adult Canadian would have to eat 2,200 heads of lettuce or 9,000 apples every day of his or her life to take in enough pesticide residue to reach the level that has been proven to have no adverse affect on health.

CropLife Canada is the trade association representing the developers, manufacturers and distributors of plant science innovations – pest control products and plant biotechnology – for use in agriculture, urban and public health settings. CropLife Canada stands for safety and innovation supported by a foundation of continuous research and a strong commitment to stewardship.

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For further information:

Bob Reid, Veritas Communications: 416-482-2248 ext. 245

Catherine Baker, Veritas Communications: 416-482-2248 ext.241

Debra Conlon, CropLife Canada: 416-622-9771 ext. 233

[www.croplife.ca/foodforthought](http://www.croplife.ca/foodforthought)