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## Pesticide Control Service

The PCS is comprised of two closely integrated Divisions, the Pesticide Registration Division and the Pesticide Residues Division and has a staff complement of 61. It is responsible for the development and implementation of the Regulatory Systems for both plant protection and biocidal products. The Regulatory Systems in place ensure that these products can be used in safety. They establish a very high level of protection for man, animals and the environment. Possible risks that arise are assessed using the most up-to-date scientific information, models and techniques. Products are not authorised for use unless it is shown that there will be no harmful effects on human health and no unacceptable impact on the environment. Risk mitigation measures, including the use of buffer zones, are prescribed where necessary and are reflected on approved product labels.

### History

The Pesticide Control Service of DAF was established in 1973 with the recruitment of a pesticide specialist. A voluntary scheme for the registration of pesticides was introduced in 1976 – The Pesticide Registration Safety Approval Scheme. PCS offices were initially located in Agriculture House before moving to

24 Upper Merrion Street (now the location of the Merrion Hotel) in 1978. In 1980 the PCS further expanded when a “temporary” laboratory was built within the confines of the Butter Testing Station at Harcourt Terrace to facilitate analysis of food samples for pesticide residues.

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Following the introduction of additional legislation to control marketing and use of pesticides and the allocation of additional staff for its implementation, a decision was made in 1987 to move regulatory and enforcement staff from Merrion Street to Abbotstown and to re-furbish the laboratory facilities in Abbotstown to accommodate the staff from the Harcourt Terrace laboratory. The move to Abbotstown took place in 1991 and provided, for the first time, a single office/laboratory environment for the staff of the PCS, which increased the level of interaction between staff members and resulted in an improvement in service delivery. Staff numbers had risen to 22 by 1993.

The introduction of further legislation on plant protection products (Directive 91/414/EEC), the assignment of responsibility for Biocides legislation to DAF, the demands of laboratory accreditation and associated increases in staff numbers, again highlighted the need to further develop and upgrade the laboratory facilities at Abbotstown to meet the higher standards required for a modern accredited analytical laboratory. This overlapped with DAF plans to re-locate all of its Dublin based laboratories to Backweston and the PCS moved to its new location in the period between September and November 2005.

### **Current Work**

The new laboratory facilities meet the specific needs of the PCS whilst providing the space, adaptability and access to the latest technology necessary to deal with current and future demands that may be made on a section of a modern Government Department.

Plant Protection and Biocidal Products are essential inputs for the sustainable production of high quality food at affordable prices. Of their nature plant protection and biocidal products are biologically active.

Plant protection products are used to control harmful organisms (weeds, pathogens, insect pests) while biocidal products are used to disinfect surfaces and preserve materials. Because of their potential for unintended impact on human health and the environment Governments throughout the developed world have established sophisticated systems to regulate their distribution and use.

Pesticide usage surveys are undertaken each year to provide essential data necessary to assess impact of use on the environment.

The monitoring programme for pesticide residues in food and feed continues to be a critical element of the measures in place to ensure consumer safety and ensure that pesticides are used correctly.

The Residues Laboratory is accredited to undertake testing in accordance with ISO 17025. The annual monitoring programme for pesticide residues in food and feed involves analysis of some 1,350 samples of food and feed for some 250 different pesticides and their metabolites to ensure that food on the Irish market is free of unacceptable residues.

An inspection programme is undertaken to ensure that plant protection products offered for sale are registered and are properly packaged and labelled in accordance involves at the premises of wholesale and retail distributors. Samples of products offered for sale are taken for subsequent analysis to ensure compliance with the approved product specifications. Inspections are also carried out at farmers and other end-user premises to ensure that products are being used in accordance with approved label instructions.

The annual inspection programme involves some 1,400 on-farm inspections and some 700 inspections at the premises of wholesale and retail distributors and end-users other than farmers. Approximately 150 samples of products offered for sale are analysed to check for compliance with their approved specifications.

It is likely that further controls being developed will on introduction require the training and certification of persons involved in the distribution and use of pesticides, will require certification of inspection and calibration of application equipment, will make the collection of statistics on sale and use of pesticides mandatory and will introduce a requirement to develop and maintain action plans for reduction of the risks associated with use of pesticides.

