

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



UTAS mixes environmental formula to protect waterways

A unique model that strikes a balance between land productivity and protecting waterways from pesticide pollution has been developed by University of Tasmania researchers.

Data obtained through the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR) study is being used by the CSIRO to develop a Pesticide Impact Rating Index (PIRI-Tas) for training, education and best practice management.

Farmers, the forestry industry and councils are adopting the PIRI-Tas measures as part of a 10-year project to encourage pesticide users to minimise the risk of waterway pollution.

The TIAR chief project investigator, Dr Richard Doyle, said the research reviewed the breakdown and sorption of chemicals and their leaching in soil profiles.

Dr Doyle said the project would help industry to select which pesticide formulas to use for which conditions to help reduce their environmental impact, and support continued Government water monitoring across Tasmania.

“We need to manage our water quality and for this we need to know the fate of pesticides in the environment to stop them polluting our water and lowering its quality,” he said.

“It’s critical that we come up with better ways to manage pesticides or they will be banned; some of these pesticides can triple productivity.”

Dr Doyle said the research, conducted over autumn into winter and again in spring and summer, found seasonal factors were critical to pesticide breakdown rates.

He said cool and dry winter conditions led to extended residues in soil of several chemicals, in particular simazine, glyphosate (Roundup) and sulfometuron methyl (Oust).

“Soils become the buffering and holding point of these chemicals and with a choice of better formulas for these pesticides that stick to the soil, we are producing better environmental outcomes.”

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