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For immediate release

New findings reveal potential effects of pesticides on Australian health

Friends of the Earth (FoE) recently assessed various pesticide residue and scientific reports which reveal the potentially alarming impacts of pesticides on human health in Australia.

Scientists have discovered pesticides regularly detected on Australian foods have been linked to possible problems with human endocrine function, ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), learning and behavioural problems, lower IQ and possible increases in Lymphoblastic Leukemia in children.

Of the 125 types of pesticides detected on the Australian fruit and vegetables surveyed, 45% are suspected endocrine disruptors, with 62% of the number of detections related to suspected endocrine disrupting pesticides.

Endocrine disruption occurs when a synthetic chemical is absorbed into the body and either mimics or blocks hormones and disrupts the body's normal functions causing hormone levels to alter, halt or stimulate production which can change the way hormones travel through the body.

A number of health issues can be related to endocrine disruption including reproductive problems such as reduced fertility, male and female reproductive tract abnormalities, skewed male/female sex ratios, early puberty, brain and behaviour problems, impaired immune functions and various cancers. In addition, long term exposure to pesticides through diet has been linked to the development of Parkinson's disease.

Shane Heaton, BFA Nutrition, said "Banning the use of the harmful pesticides, should result in a beneficial impact on human health".

"Choosing organic food gives consumers the benefit of having chemical-free food, whilst providing public health and occupation benefits to farmers," Shane said.

BFA General Manager, Holly Vyner, said "Consumers who choose organic are often more aware of the potential side effects of pesticides in the food chain, and are working consciously to minimise their contact with them".

Holly explains it is important to ensure you are purchasing a genuine organic product by only buying products which display a certification logo.

"It's important to look for a logo such as the Australian Certified Organic 'Bud'. This provides assurance that products comply with strict Australian organic standards," she said.

The most 'at risk' foods in Australia due to pesticide exposure include apples, wheat, strawberries, pears and grapes.

ENDS

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