



**Agricultural Marketing Service**

# The Pesticide Data Program

**Helping monitor the safety of America's food supply**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) helps ensure the quality and fair marketing of U.S. agricultural products. Scientists from many disciplines are an important part of the more than 4,000 dedicated AMS employees, providing scientific expertise and data to ensure the quality of American food and products. From farm to fork, our data-driven approach to marketing relies on science to help American farms and businesses succeed and assure consumers that the food they feed their families is safe.

The AMS Monitoring Programs Division (MPD) directs and oversees the Pesticide Data Program (PDP), a national pesticide residue database program. PDP data are used by Federal agencies, academic institutions, food producers, food processors, chemical manufacturers, environmental interest groups, and food safety organizations to examine pesticide residue issues that may affect agricultural practices and domestic and international trade. PDP data are also useful in promoting the export of U.S. commodities in a competitive global market and addressing food safety issues. PDP works with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to monitor pesticide residue levels found in foods, reassuring consumers that any pesticide residues in foods remain at safe levels.

**Based on the PDP data, consumers can feel confident about eating a diet that is rich in fresh fruits and vegetables.**

[www.ams.usda.gov/pdp](http://www.ams.usda.gov/pdp)



## **Pesticide Data Program A National Pesticide Residue Testing Program**

The PDP is a national pesticide residue testing effort achieved through cooperative programs with State agriculture departments and other Federal agencies. PDP manages the sampling, testing, and reporting of pesticide residues on a wide variety of domestic and imported foods using a sound statistical program. PDP results include product information such as country of origin, lot number, product claim (e.g., organic), residue findings, and quality control sample results. The data produced by PDP are shared with other Federal agencies and stakeholders and are available to the general public in a web-based database and in an annual summary.



## **Pesticide Residues Are Closely Regulated**

Pesticide residues refer to the pesticides that may remain in or on food after they are applied to a food crop and the use of pesticides is strictly controlled in the United States. By law, EPA is responsible for regulating the pesticides that are used by growers to protect crops and for setting limits on the amount of pesticides that may remain in or on foods marketed in the United States. These limits on pesticides left on foods are called "tolerances." In the United States, tolerances are established by EPA based on crop residue trial data and the potential risks the pesticide poses to human health or the environment. The tolerance is not expected to be exceeded when the pesticide is used according to its label directions and good agricultural practices are followed.

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## PDP Provides Reliable Data on the Safety of America's Food Supply

The PDP provides reliable data that help assure consumers that the food they feed their families is safe. The pesticide data that USDA publishes each year provide regulators, scientists, registrants, farmers, processors, and consumers with important insights into the actual levels of pesticide residues found on widely consumed foods. EPA uses PDP data to conduct dietary risk assessments and to ensure that any pesticide residues in foods remain at safe levels.

The PDP annual summaries consistently show that 99 percent of sampled products had residues below EPA tolerances. The PDP data demonstrate that overall pesticide residues found on foods tested are at levels below the tolerances established by EPA and pose no safety concern. Based on the PDP data, consumers can feel confident about eating a diet that is rich in fresh fruits and vegetables.

## PDP Evaluates a Wide Variety of Agricultural Products

PDP tests both fresh and processed fruit and vegetables, grains, dairy, meat, poultry, and other specialty food items such as honey, corn syrup, infant formula, fish, and nuts for pesticide residues. Organic fruit and vegetables are a part of this testing. Each year, USDA and EPA work together to identify foods to be tested on a rotating basis. PDP coordinates with EPA to determine

which samples should be collected and tested to meet EPA data needs. PDP collects data to provide a statistical representation of pesticide residues present in the food supply. PDP is not designed for enforcement of EPA pesticide residue tolerances.

## Established in 1991, PDP is an Important Part of the U.S. Food Safety System

The Pesticide Data Program was established in 1991, as part of a food safety initiative. The EPA uses the PDP data when looking at dietary pesticide exposure, a critical step to verify that all sources of exposure to pesticides meet U.S. safety standards. PDP concentrates its efforts in providing pesticide residue data on foods most consumed by children. This PDP policy is guided by the requirements of the 1996 Food Quality Protection Act and by recommendations made in 1993 by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in "Pesticides in the Diets of Infants and Children."

PDP informs the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) if residues detected exceed the EPA tolerance or have no EPA tolerance established. PDP residue results are reported to FDA and EPA through monthly reports. In instances where a PDP finding is extraordinary and may pose a safety risk, FDA and EPA are immediately notified.



## PDP Performed by Trained Personnel Using Statistically Based Methods

Samples for PDP testing are collected by trained personnel using statistically reliable procedures designed for each PDP commodity, which assures the data are representative of dietary exposure to pesticide residues in the U.S. diet. Fruit, vegetable, dairy, and specialty product samples collected are divided among the States collecting samples according to that State's population and are randomly selected from terminal markets and large distribution centers. This sampling method assures the residue measurements include pesticides applied during crop production and those applied after harvest (such as fungicides and growth regulators). Meat/poultry and grain samples are collected directly from slaughter facilities and grain carriers, respectively.

Participation as a PDP sampling site is voluntary. Approximately 600 sites across the United States allow access and provide information such as site volume data. PDP standard operating procedures set the criteria for site selection and instructions for sample selection, shipping and handling, and chain-of-custody.

## PDP Samples are Analyzed by Accredited Laboratories

All PDP laboratories have achieved ISO 17025 accreditation and are equipped with instrumentation capable of detecting residues at very low levels. The PDP testing methods detect the smallest possible levels of pesticide residues, including levels below the tolerances set by the EPA. Laboratory chemists receive intensive training and must demonstrate proficiency on an ongoing basis. Approximately 450 pesticides and their breakdown products are analyzed using methods capable of detecting hundreds of pesticides in a single test. Occasionally, at EPA's request, single analyte residue methods are used to test for specific pesticides of concern. Approximately 10,000 samples are collected and tested each year.

The PDP data are available on the AMS website or by contacting MPD.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

USDA, Agricultural  
Marketing Service  
Science and Technology  
Programs  
Monitoring Programs Division  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Room 0611 South, Stop 0276  
Washington DC 20250

Phone:  
202-572-8177

Email:  
[amsmpo.data@ams.usda.gov](mailto:amsmpo.data@ams.usda.gov)