

## An open letter to Syngenta customers and growers

Syngenta  
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Syngenta has been working with industry to voluntarily withdraw some batches of GESAGARD which have been discovered to contain low-level impurities. This situation has attracted continued media attention from the *Weekly Times*.

Syngenta is concerned that the errors and inaccurate assertions contained in recent *Weekly Times* articles may unduly alarm growers, distribution partners and the market.

While those working with us know the situation and the appropriate actions Syngenta has taken, we want to ensure everyone understands the facts of the issue and are not be misled by inaccurate or unsubstantiated claims in the media.

### **A summary of the situation**

- 10 batches of GESAGARD have been identified as containing low-level impurities. These impurities are the result of a production issue with the equipment used by our third party toller to manufacture the product.
- Syngenta has tested all retained samples of GESAGARD and all other batches are within product specifications. It is only the 10 identified batches of GESAGARD which are affected.
- Syngenta conducted a risk assessment based on the test results from the affected batches. The assessment determined the impurities posed an extremely low risk to crops, people and the environment. This was based on the extremely low level of impurities and the usage rate of the product.
- Syngenta is continuing to work with distribution partners and industry to voluntarily withdraw the affected batches of GESAGARD. We are also keeping the Australian Pesticides and

Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) informed about the steps we have been taking in this matter.

- Syngenta is concerned that certain media reports are providing inaccurate information to growers, customers and the market.
- Syngenta has also been made aware that a certain consultant is communicating to distribution partners that it is illegal to sell GESAGARD. Such claims are completely false and unfounded.
- Any customers or growers who have concerns regarding the affected batches are encouraged to contact Syngenta Customer Service on 1800 067 108.

## **More information on the voluntary withdrawal of identified GESAGARD batches**

In January 2017, Syngenta was made aware of the presence of low-level impurities contained in four batches of GESAGARD which were manufactured between March 2016 and December 2016. The presence of these low-level impurities were the result of a production issue with the equipment used by our third party toller to manufacture the product.

When informed about the issue by our third party toller, Syngenta quarantined all stock and tested all retained samples of all GESAGARD batches which were manufactured between March 2016 and December 2016. This testing confirmed four identified batches of GESAGARD contained low-level impurities.

It was only after the testing of these samples was completed and the batches confirmed to be within product specifications that Syngenta released these cleared batches for sale. Any suggestion that Syngenta continued to sell batches of GESAGARD which we knew were contaminated, as claimed by the *Weekly Times*, is absolutely false.

Syngenta conducted a risk assessment of the identified batches of GESAGARD which were not within product specifications. The assessment determined the impurities posed an extremely low risk to crops, people and the environment. This was based on the extremely low level of impurities and the usage rate of the product. However, the level of impurities exceeded the stringent quality standards Syngenta sets for these products, which are in keeping with internationally-recognised standards.

As a result, Syngenta made the decision to voluntarily withdraw the four batches of GESAGARD from distribution partners. This was determined to be the most appropriate course of action to work with distribution partners as they have the best line of sight as to where the product is located.

Syngenta self-reported the presence of low-level impurities in identified batches to the APVMA and shared the test results and proposed withdrawal plan. The APVMA reviewed the plans put forward by Syngenta and we remained in dialogue with the APVMA throughout the voluntary withdrawal process.

As specified under the APVMA voluntary withdrawal requirements, we identified 60 distribution customers who had potentially received product from the identified four batches. An electronic direct communication and follow-up phone call was made to all 60 customers informing them of the issue and asking them to remove identified batches from shelves and commence the returns process. Syngenta also notified all distribution partner contacts in its client relationship management (CRM) database by electronic direct communication.

Following the voluntary withdrawal in January 2017, Syngenta continued to test all retained samples of GESAGARD. This process was completed in June 2017 and a further six batches of GESAGARD – which were manufactured between February 2013 and November 2014 – were identified as containing low-level impurities. All other batches were confirmed as being within product

specifications.

Syngenta conducted a risk assessment on the test results of the six identified batches of GESAGARD which were not within product specifications. This testing determined that the impurities pose an extremely low risk to crops, people and the environment, given the extremely low level of impurities and the low usage rate of the product. Based on this assessment, the decision was made to voluntarily withdraw the six batches of GESAGARD from distribution partners. The APVMA was informed about the further six identified batches and the proposed withdrawal plan. An electronic direct communication and follow-up phone calls were made to customers who potentially received product from identified batches.

At all times, we have made it very clear that we encouraged any customer or grower to contact us if they had concerns or believed that they were adversely affected by the situation. This is the standard process for both this situation and any product performance enquiry.

To date, we have been contacted by 9 growers with enquiries. All but two of these enquiries have been resolved.

## **Response to recent articles in the *Weekly Times***

On 14 June 2017, the *Weekly Times* published several articles regarding the voluntary withdrawal of certain batches of GESAGARD which contained numerous errors and incorrect assertions. These included:

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- The *Weekly Times* claimed that “Syngenta continued to sell batches of Gesagard despite knowing they were contaminated”.

This is absolutely false.

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- The *Weekly Times* claimed that “Syngenta has not offered to conduct residue test for farmers who have used the contaminated Gesagard.”

This is incorrect. Syngenta has conducted residue testing at the request of certain growers who have raised concerns with us. The results of these test show that the identified impurities were not detectable on crops treated with affected batches of GESAGARD.

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- The *Weekly Times* suggested a connection between affected batches of GESAGARD and breaching maximum residue limits (MRLs) which can jeopardise Australia’s vegetable export market.

This is not true. Syngenta has conducted residue testing at the request of certain growers who treated crops with affected batches of GESAGARD. The results of these tests show that the identified impurities were not detectable on crops treated with affected batches of GESAGARD. We believe it is inaccurate reporting which unduly alarms readers is the threat to national vegetable markets.

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- The *Weekly Times* claimed that ametryn was one of the contaminants present in affected batches of GESAGARD.

This is incorrect. Ametryn is a natural by-product of Prometryn, which is the lead active ingredient in GESAGARD.

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- The *Weekly Times* has consistently claims that Syngenta has “recalled” identified batches of GESAGARD.

This is incorrect. This is a voluntary withdrawal, not a recall.

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- The *Weekly Times* has suggested that 260,000 litres of product has been withdrawn.

This is incorrect. Syngenta has identified approximately 134,400 litres which have been affected by the production issue.

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We have raised our concerns regarding these errors and incorrect assertions with the *Weekly Times*. We are extremely disappointed that this situation has not been accurately reported at a time when Syngenta and industry are working together to resolve the issue.

Syngenta has also been made aware that a certain consultant is communicating to distribution partners that it is illegal to sell GESAGARD. These claims are completely false. We are extremely disappointed that such unfounded claims are being made, which risk causing damage to the industry. The sale of GESAGARD by distribution partners is legal and any suggestion to the contrary is untrue and should not be given any merit.

As always, any customers or growers who have concerns regarding the affected batches are encouraged to contact Syngenta Customer Service on 1800 067 108.