

science summary



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International workshop on bioaerosols from green-waste composting Science Summary SC050009/110

On 28 February 2006 the Environment Agency held an invited workshop to assess the risks to health from bioaerosols associated with the composting of green waste. The workshop was part of our work programme to develop our requirements regarding bioaerosols, and their potential health effects and risk assessments.

The objectives of the workshop included informing delegates on how the Environment Agency approaches the issues that surround bioaerosols from green-waste composting and to draw attention to some of the research currently sponsored by the Environment Agency in this area. The delegates included UK regulators, academics, composting industry staff and risk assessment contractors.

The audience heard workshop presentations that described:

- the challenges the UK faces to meet its European Union Landfill Directive obligations
- how the Environment Agency is changing the way it manages license applications from industry
- the composting industry's viewpoint on the challenges it faces
- research in Germany and Holland on the health effects of bioaerosols
- current science and knowledge gaps in this area
- bioaerosol modelling
- research currently underway that is sponsored by the Environment Agency.

After the presentations, smaller groups discussed their content and, more specifically, aspects of the pressing need to standardise how sampling and cultures are carried out. It was agreed that variations in the protocols and methods used hindered how risk assessments can be interpreted and compared. All present thought that further research was needed in several areas to improve the quality of the scientific data used in bioaerosol risk assessments.

The workshop was welcomed by all the participants as an opportunity to discuss current research and

developments on bioaerosols from green-waste composting. The workshop provided an excellent opportunity to promote work funded by the Environment Agency and highlighted the importance and utility of collaborative working and funding in this area.

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