

Recent Changes in the Wheat and Barley Foliar Fungicide Status Quo

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Since the fall of 2006, several fungicides have received Section 3 or supplemental labels allowing application for disease control in wheat and barley. These changes have their origin in EPA's favorable response (2006) to a review of triazole chemistry. Without going into any details, new section 3 labels of triazole fungicides were held up for years due to questions regarding the environment and health risks associated with a common breakdown product of triazole fungicides. A favorable ruling by EPA on this question opened the door for the section 3 labeling of new triazole fungicides.

The Bayer fungicide, Proline 480SC (prothioconazole), labeled in the fall of 2006, was one of the first post-EPA-review triazoles to receive a section 3 label allowing application to wheat and barley. Proline is among the best available products for managing FHB and DON, but due to its rather high cost, several states were successful in getting a section 18 for Folicur 4F (and other generic tebuconazole fungicides) for FHB/DON management in 2007. Subsequently, Bayer issued a 2ee recommendation for the combination of Folicur + Proline to manage FHB and other diseases. Proline is not strong against rust diseases, but this weakness is taken care of by adding Folicur, which is excellent against rusts. The FHB/DON suppression is about the same for Proline and Proline + Folicur, but both offer better FHB/DON suppression than solo Folicur (or generic tebuconazoles). The mix is somewhat more economical than solo Proline since a reduced rate of Proline is used when mixed with Folicur. This 2ee recommendation is still in place for 2008. During the winter months of 2007-08, stakeholders in several states had considerable interest in seeking section 18 labels allowing tebuconazole use in 2008. However, due to the availability of Proline and more favorable production economics compared to 2007, EPA made it clear that a tebuconazole section 18 was extremely unlikely to be approved in 2008.

On April 21, 2008, EPA granted section 3 labels for two new BASF fungicides containing the active ingredient, metconazole. Caramba is straight metconazole (8.6 % a.i.) and Multiva is a premix of Caramba (7.4% metconazole) and Headline (12% pyraclostrobin). To my knowledge, these products are still in the process of getting states to approve the labels, but this should be accomplished shortly in most states. However, due to the lateness of label approvals relative to the stage of wheat development, most Caramba or Multiva applications made in 2008 will be restricted to wheat and barley in the north. That is, by the time the labels are approved, most applications to wheat and barley in the South will be completed.

On May 2, Bayer announced that Folicur was granted a supplemental label to its existing section 3 label, which allows for application to wheat and Barley in most wheat-producing states. Most states had previously approved the use of Folicur on peanuts and some grasses; this is the reason for the supplemental label as opposed to the new section 3 labels now taking effect for Caramba and Multiva. Finally, an additional tebuconazole fungicide, Orius 4F, may now be applied in most states. Manufacturers of other tebuconazole fungicides, however, have some additional hoops to jump through before they may be applied for disease control in wheat or barley.

I have tried to give a general overview in this article, but some of the details may vary from state to state. Contact your state's pesticide office with any state-specific pesticide questions.