Pesticide Modernization

Working Group Discussion

What we heard from testimonies for 5155

Purpose of Today's Discussion

Use public-hearing testimony to frame the design questions for a modern pesticide reporting system.

What we heard

- Support for more accessible, detailed pesticide-use data
- Concerns about privacy, burden, cost and interpretation

What DEEP raised

- Supports electronic collection/reporting in concept
- Questions about breadth, reliability, privacy, cost and enforcement

What the group can decide

- What data is needed
- Who reports and who can access it
- How to make the system useful, fair and sustainable

What Problem Is Modernization Trying to Solve?

- Testimony described current information as difficult to search, aggregate and analyze.
- Supporters emphasized gaps in location-specific information, especially for commercial applications.
- Several witnesses said pesticide-treated seed information is not adequately captured.
- Opponents stressed that licensed applicators already maintain records and submit required reports.
- Shared question: can Connecticut improve usability of existing information without creating unnecessary duplication?

What Information Could a Modernized System Capture?

WHAT?

Product / active ingredient

HOW MUCH?

Quantity sold or applied

WHERE?

Geographic location

WHEN?

Date / frequency

WHO?

Reporter / applicator / distributor

Core design question: Which elements are necessary for oversight, research and transparency—and at what level of detail?

Question 1 — How Specific Should Location Information Be?

Why supporters want location data

- Connect use with water-quality monitoring
- Identify potential hotspots and cumulative watershed impacts
- Support exposure and epidemiological research
- Inform testing, enforcement and policy

Concerns about exact locations

- Private-property and customer confidentiality
- Potential exposure of customer lists or farm operations
- Competitive / proprietary business information
- Risk of targeting or misinterpretation

Options raised: parcel/address • census tract • town • county • watershed • aggregated/anonymized data

Why Supporters Say More Detailed Data Matters

Water & ecosystems

- Rivers, groundwater, reservoirs and Long Island Sound
- Compare use patterns with environmental monitoring
- Impacts on aquatic organisms, wildlife and pollinators

Public health & research

- Assess potential community exposures
- Support maternal/child and epidemiological research

1. • Track use trends over time and identify areas for further study

Transparency & policy

- Make records easier to search
- Give policymakers better evidence
- Increase public access to information about pesticide use

Research Value Highlighted in Testimony

- Researchers cited California's pesticide-use reporting data as valuable for tracking trends and estimating nearby exposure.
- Testimony referenced New York as an example of public pesticide-use information informing local policy.
- Supporters argued that searchable historical data can help connect pesticide-use patterns with environmental and health outcomes.
- Working-group opportunity: examine what other states collect, how they protect data, and what the information is actually used for.

Question 2 — How Should Pesticide-Treated Seeds Be Addressed?

Supportive testimony

- Treated seeds represent a significant data gap
- Tracking distribution could improve understanding of pesticide use
- Some testimony suggested reporting by distributors rather than farmers

Concerns raised

- Define precisely what counts as pesticide-treated seed
- Avoid duplicative requirements
- Distribution may not equal environmental exposure
- Raw data may omit context about treatment type, rate and exposure pathway

DEEP Perspective — Commissioner Katie S. Dykes

Conceptual support

- DEEP supports electronic data collection and reporting.
- Modern technology could improve knowledge of where, what and how much pesticide is used.

Implementation concerns

- Breadth of data
- Incomplete or unreliable data
- Potential misuse
- Responsibility for another agency's data
- Privacy on private property

Resources

- Proposed funding may be insufficient
- Historical digitization is significant
- Ongoing maintenance will cost money
- Expanded reporting may increase enforcement needs

Question 3 — What Is the Reporting Burden?

- Farmers, landscapers, golf courses, greenhouse growers and applicators described limited administrative capacity.
- Concerns included new software, staff time, training, data entry and compliance oversight.
- Several witnesses argued existing FIFRA/state records should be modernized rather than duplicated.
- Small and family-run operations said fixed compliance costs could affect them disproportionately.
- Design question: can data be submitted once and reused across regulatory needs?

Question 4 — Privacy, Confidentiality & Proprietary Information

Customer / property privacy

- Exact addresses may reveal who receives pest-control or lawn-care services.
- Some testimony raised sensitive residential-treatment scenarios.

Business information

- Customer lists may be indirectly exposed.
- Product selection, timing, rates and treatment programs may have competitive value.

Potential design responses

- Aggregate or anonymize public data
- Separate agency-level from public access
- Define confidential fields
- Apply cybersecurity and access controls

Question 5 — How Do We Make the Data Meaningful?

A recurring concern: pesticide-use data does not necessarily equal pesticide risk without context.

- Application method
- Application rate
- Weather
- Pest pressure
- IPM practices
- Product characteristics
- Regulatory status
- Exposure pathways
- Degradation

Should a public database provide raw records alone, or pair them with definitions, context and explanatory tools?

Question 6 — Who Should Report?

Potential reporters

- Commercial applicators / supervisors
- Farmers
- Dealers / retailers
- Seed distributors

Equity concern

- Licensed professionals may face detailed reporting while homeowner retail use remains largely outside the system.
- Would that produce an incomplete picture of total pesticide use?

Design goal

- Assign responsibility where data already exists
- Avoid duplicate entry
- Clarify scope and frequency
- Consider reporting thresholds

Question 7 — What Will Implementation Cost?

Reporting entities

- Software / integration
- Labor and training
- Compliance oversight

DEEP

- Database development
- Data management / staffing
- Enforcement capacity

Statewide system

- Cybersecurity
- Maintenance and upgrades
- Historical digitization

Both DEEP and multiple opposing witnesses questioned whether the proposed $100,000 appropriation would be sufficient.

Where There Is Potential Common Ground

- Modernize outdated technology
- Improve DEEP's ability to manage records
- Reduce duplicative reporting
- Improve data quality and usability
- Protect environmental and public health
- Protect private/confidential information
- Provide adequate funding
- Include affected stakeholders in system design

A Possible Tiered Data-Access Model

For discussion — not a recommendation

DEEP / State Agencies
Most detailed records for oversight, enforcement and analysis

Researchers / Authorized Users
Potential access to more detailed data under safeguards

Public Database
Searchable information with privacy / confidentiality protections

From Testimony to System Design

Define the data gap

Assign reporting responsibility

Select minimum data elements

Establish access & privacy rules

Set geographic precision

Estimate costs & resources

Add context / metadata

Pilot, evaluate and refine

Discussion — What Should Connecticut's Modernized System Look Like?

- What information is essential to collect?
- How precise should location information be?
- What should be public, restricted, aggregated or anonymized?
- Who should report applications, sales and treated seeds?
- How can duplicate reporting be minimized?
- What context is needed so data is interpreted responsibly?
- What resources will DEEP and reporting entities need?
- How should success be measured?

Testimony Reflected in This Deck

Public-hearing themes supplied for the working-group discussion

- Supportive perspectives: Council on Environmental Quality; Environmental & Human Health, Inc.; Rivers Alliance; Trout Unlimited; Interreligious Eco-Justice Network; individual residents/researchers; American Bird Conservancy; Wild Ones; and other environmental/public-health testimony supplied.
- Opposing/concern perspectives: licensed applicators; farmers; Connecticut Vineyard and Winery Association; lawn-care professionals; Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment; Connecticut Association of Golf Course Superintendents; American Seed Trade Association; Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association; National Association of Landscape Professionals; and other testimony supplied.
- Agency perspective: Commissioner Katie S. Dykes / Connecticut DEEP — conceptual support for electronic reporting with concerns about scope, reliability, privacy, cost, agency responsibility and enforcement.