HYDROFARM, SUNLIGHT SUPPLY, GENERAL HYDROPONICS, DUTCH MASTER: PUTTING YOU AT RISK?

BY CHRIS JEFFERSON

The EPA says it uncovered these hydroponics product problems after receiving information from state fertilizer and pesticide regulators. Hydrofarm responded to the allegations by paying the fine and removing the products from its inventory. It claimed it didn’t know the products were harmful because it had received safety assurances from the product manufacturers. This is one of a series of product safety problems that the hydroponics industry has seen recently.

Hydrofarm and Sunlight Supply (another major hydroponics equipment wholesaler-distributor) have been tagged by government agencies for selling hydroponics bloom boosters that contain potentially-dangerous plant growth regulators (PGRs) such as PACLO (Paclobutrazol) and Daminozide.

These products are used to limit plants’ vertical growth, and to promote high-density flowers. They’re safe for ornamental crops, but not for crops you consume.

That’s why California regulators ordered Hydrofarm and Sunlight Supply to stop selling bloom boosters such as Top Load, Flower Dragon, and Phosphoload, citing harms caused by mislabeled products that may contain PGRs. These products made by companies like Dutch Master, Emerald Triangle, and other companies are potentially harmful to our community, regulators say.

Sunlight Supply and Hydrofarm reportedly still sell products containing potentially-dangerous PGRs, such as General Hydroponics Bush Load, which contain PACLO and/or other PGRs.

And you’re likely to find it interesting that RosebudMag.com reported on Sunlight Supply irrigation tubing that a California hydroponics grower claimed was responsible for leaking toxic substances that destroyed his crops.

Sunlight Supply didn’t handle the grower’s complaint in a friendly way, sources say, and the grower later reported that Sunlight Supply’s actions had not just
harmed his valuable hydroponics plants but had also stolen away his money and freedom.

The basic message we get from all this dire information is hydroponics growers have to be way more careful about what hydroponics products we buy, and what we know about them.

Distribution companies like Sunlight Supply and Hydrofarm, along with manufacturers like General Hydroponics, don’t always get it right when it comes to ensuring our safety.

In fact, when I called the major hydroponics manufacturers to ask them about product safety, plant growth regulators, and related topics, the only company that would talk to me was Advanced Nutrients. Their technical expert assured me that none of the Advanced Nutrients product contain these harmful compounds, and that their flower-boosting products have been government-tested and certified as safe for use on consumable crops.

I don’t meant to sound like I hate Sunlight Supply, Hydrofarm, or General Hydroponics…because I don’t.

I understand the huge logistical challenges that distributors like Hydrofarm and Sunlight Supply face when trying to figure out if every product they sell is safe for consumable connoisseur crops.

They’re stocking lots of inventory, and it’s hard to monitor all product risk factors, especially when hydroponics manufacturers aren’t providing all necessary details about risk potentials.

When you hear about PACLO health warnings, it is rather troubling that General Hydroponics continues to make and market an off-label PACLO product.

You can easily see why hydroponics growers are wondering if these massive hydroponics companies are more interested in profits than they are in protecting our health.

So be sure to ask your hydroponics retailers and manufacturers to tell you everything that’s in hydroponics products you’re considering buying…especially any potentially harmful ingredients. You also want to get usage and application instructions that minimize risk to you as a hydroponics grower and plant consumer!