

IMPACT OF DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL REGULATORY
CONTROLS ON THE COMPETITIVENESS OF AMERICAN
AGRICULTURE

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Methyl bromide (MB) produced and used by man is a versatile highly effective, fast-acting fumigant employed in a number of important ways to kill organisms destructive to plants. A wide spectrum of commodities is treated with MB. The compound is unique in that it provides a wide range of pest control, may be applied to a broad spectrum of both food and non-food commodities, can be used for fumigation of large and small quantities of materials, and, when applied properly, leaves no residues of toxicological significance. Recently, this compound has come under scientific scrutiny and has been identified as a potentially potent ozone-depleting chemical. As a result, countries operating under the Montreal Protocol (MP), an international treaty for regulating ozone-depleting substances, will be restricting its use, and, in some cases, eliminating its use altogether. For example, the United States (US) Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has proposed a total phase-out by 1 January 2001. Its limited use and/or potential phase-out will have severe economic implications unless alternatives become available which are efficacious, economical, and available.

Due to the complexity of researching a wide array of alternatives, the number of steps involved in making efficacious alternatives available, and the limited amount of time available, there may be many important uses for which effective alternatives will not be available by the time the phaseout takes effect. The consequences of that eventuality would pose significant competitive disadvantages for American agricultural production and trade. The more stringent provision of the US Clean Air Act (CAA) versus the MP which govern the regulatory controls in other countries of the world have come under considerable debate by the US agricultural community and the US Congress regarding the economic and competitive position of American agriculture.