

## THE CURRENT METHYL BROMIDE SITUATION

*William Terry Kelley*  
*Extension Horticulturist*  
*University of Georgia*  
*P.O. Box 748*  
*Tifton, GA 31793*  
[wtkelley@uga.edu](mailto:wtkelley@uga.edu)

Georgia vegetable growers have had access to methyl bromide through critical use exemption ever since the fumigant was phased out in 2005. The production allowed through critical use exemption and the existing stocks have so far been sufficient to meet the demand for methyl bromide by Georgia growers. However, that landscape is beginning to change and it is clear the critical use exemption process is going to have its limitations as well as an ever-shortening life span.

University of Georgia Extension Vegetable Team personnel along with The Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association have submitted critical use exemption packages for Georgia growers every year since 2002. The first application was for the 2005 growing season and was considered at the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol in the fall of 2003. The most recent Meeting of the Parties was in New Delhi from October 30 to November 3 where the applications for 2008 were considered.

The result of the most recent meeting was probably the most optimistic result that has occurred for the U.S. since the critical use exemption process began. In previous years, the U.S. request has been far greater than the allocation that was allowed. Although the most recent allocation was not as much as requested, it was by far a greater percentage of the request than the U.S. has gotten in the past.

The bottom line is that growers will have methyl bromide available to them in both 2007 and 2008. The 2007 critical use exemption applications were considered at the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties in 2005. However, the amount that is being allowed through critical use exemption is shrinking each year and so are the stocks of methyl bromide. Data released by the EPA recently shows that stocks of methyl bromide have declined from 16.42 metric tons in 2003 to 9.97 metric tons in 2005.

All critical use exemptions allocations relate to the 1991 baseline level of methyl bromide production when the phase out began. For 2008, the U.S. requested 24% of the 1991 baseline and was granted 21%. Of that, 3% must come from existing stocks, which means that only 18% of that which was produced in 1991 can be produced for 2008.

For 2007, the U.S. will have 26.25% of the 1991 baseline, but only 20% from new production. In 2006, the U.S. was allowed 32% of the baseline with 27% in new production and in 2005, 37.5 % with 30% from new production. So, it is clear that the amount of methyl bromide allowed through this process is declining. Georgia growers have critical use exemption for methyl bromide on squash, tomatoes, peppers, cantaloupe, eggplant and cucumber. Methyl bromide prices are increasing and supplies are declining. Therefore, growers should think seriously about adopting alternative strategies.