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Implementation towards the achievement of the 2020 goal of sound chemicals management: emerging policy issues and other issues of concern: proposal on highly hazardous pesticides as an issue of concern

Global action on highly hazardous pesticides – information document submitted by the Pesticides Action Network and the International POPs Elimination Network

Note by the secretariat

The secretariat has the honour to circulate an information document submitted by Pesticides Action Network and the International POPs Elimination Network on global action on highly hazardous pesticides (see annex). The document is reproduced as received by the secretariat, without formal editing.

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Annex

Global Action on Highly Hazardous Pesticides

Information Document for ICCM4, September 2015

Submitted by: Pesticides Action Network (PAN) and IPEN

Introduction

Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) are a threat to human health and the environment with significant impacts on developing and transition countries in particular. Global concern is clearly increasing every year. At ICCM3, a large number of countries from all UN regions, as well as international agencies and civil society organisations, supported actions on HHPs, including developing a priority list of substances for a progressive ban and substitution with safer alternatives. During the subsequent round of SAICM regional meetings more than 140 countries reiterated that concern, and called for more information on HHPs that are in use and for more information on safer alternatives. At the Open Ended Working Group, in December 2014, the African Region Proposed a Global Alliance to phase out Highly Hazardous Pesticides. PAN and IPEN support this proposal from the African region.

Concerted global action is needed to phase out HHPs because of their effects on human health and the environment, and the costs to society of their continuing use. A collaborative and participatory initiative to promote activities, facilitate communication between stakeholders and monitor progress towards targets and goals is needed, and SAICM is ideally placed to provide a platform for such an initiative, whether it is called a Global Alliance or goes by another name – for now we call it the Global Alliance.

Safer Alternatives

Safer alternatives are available, especially ecosystem approaches to pest and weed management, such as agroecology;[1] but much greater support is needed to enable farmers to effectively implement these alternatives to HHPs.

The first important step is to relook at the role and current levels of pesticide use. There is broad support internationally for reducing pesticide use and assisting farmers to replace pesticides with ecosystem approaches to pest management.

The SAICM texts specifically noted the need to "reduce dependency on pesticides" (Dubai Declaration, clause 6), to "phase out highly toxic pesticides" (Global Plan of Action, clause 8), and "prioritize the procurement of least hazardous pest control measures", specifically referring to "non chemical alternative means of pest control" (Global Plan of Action, clauses 26 and 27).

The 2012 Stockholm Convention Conference of Parties recommended that countries give priority to ecosystem approaches to pest management when replacing endosulfan. The *International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management* gives special focus to Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as a means to reduce reliance on pesticides and their associated risks, and the Code's *Guidance on Pest and Pesticide Management Policy Development* describes IPM as an ecosystem approach in which pesticides are used if other nonchemical approaches are not available or fail. Two UN Special Rapporteurs on the right to food have concluded that there must be a shift to more environmentally sustainable methods of food production, such as agroecology, in which, again, pesticides are used as a last resort.[2] [3] The 2009 International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology

[1] Agroecology may be an unfamiliar concept to some people. Long considered the foundation of sustainable agriculture, it is the science and practice of applying ecological concepts, principles and knowledge to the study, design and management of sustainable agroecosystems.

[2] De Schutter O. 2011. Agroecology and the Right to Food. United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. A/HRC/16/49. http://www.srfood.org/index.php/en/component/content/article/1174-report-agroecologyand-the-right-to-food.

De Schutter O. 2014. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food. Final report: the transformative potential of the right to food. Human Rights Council, Twenty-fifth session. United Nations General Assembly. A/HRC/25/57.

[3] In her debut speech as the new UN Special Rapporteur on the right to Food, Professor Hial Elver reiterated the call of her predecessor, Oliver de Schutter, that government must shift their focus from industrial agriculture to agroecology, which she described as offering far more environmentally and socially sustainable methods of production that can still meet the rapidly growing demand for food. In: Ahmed N. 2014. UN: only agroecology can feed the world. **Ecologist**. 23rd September.

for Development (IAASTD),[4] and recently the Director General of FAO,[5] acknowledged that the way food is being produced must change, both lending support to agroecology. It therefore makes sense that when countries are phasing out HHPs they look first to ecosystem approaches to pest management, such as agroecology, as their replacement.

At ICCM4, PAN is releasing its new book *Replacing Chemicals with Biology in Farming: Phasing out Highly Hazardous Pesticides with Agroecology*. This book provides compelling evidence that ecosystem approaches to pest management, and particularly agroecology, increase yields particularly in developing countries; increase farm profitability; reduce pesticide use often to zero; improve resilience to climate change including to floods, droughts and hurricanes; improve food security and food sovereignty; can provide greater benefits to women farmers; and provide a whole range of social and environmental outcomes such as stronger farmer cooperation and community cohesion, as well as reduced environmental pollution and loss of biodiversity. For example,

- An analysis of 286 sustainable agriculture projects in 57 countries, involving 12.6 million farmers on 37 million hectares (3% of the total cultivated land in low income countries) found the average yield increase was 79% across a wide variety of systems and crop types.
- A study in Kenya, found the push-pull system of weed management resulted in dramatic yield increases, for example of maize by 350%, sorghum of 250%, and finger millet of more than 100%.
- The introduction of a tiny parasitic wasp in the West Sahel resulted in millet yield increases of 40%.
- Sustainable Rice Intensification (SRI) has resulted in net income increases across Asia of between 59 and 773%.
- Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture in Andhra Pradesh, India showed significant net income increases, because yields stay much the same but costs of pest management decrease by 70-80%.
- A study published in 2009, of 840 farmers in the Philippines, found that twice as many organic farmers as conventional farmers had increased their food security since 2000. They also had a more diverse diet: organic farmers ate 68% more vegetables, 56% more fruit, 55% more protein-rich staples and 40% more meat than in 2000.

More information on these examples, and many others, can be found in the book *Replacing Chemicals with Biology in Farming: Phasing out Highly Hazardous Pesticides with agroecology* (Watts MA, Williamson S. 2015. PAN International. In press).

Making it Happen

Agroecology is not limited to one context: it applies to all forms of agriculture in all countries. It is already practised by millions of farmers on millions of hectares on all continents. But there is a need to expand this approach to all farms, to assist in phasing out HHPs. This is not something that can happen overnight, but rather must be a planned and resourced process of assisting farmers to make the transition from chemical-based farming to biology-based farming, developing appropriate supportive infrastructure where necessary. The transition is critically important; it must be considered and coherent, and government involvement is needed both to remove the existing barriers to sustainable agriculture and to put appropriate support in place. How governments can best assist farmers to make the necessary changes is detailed in *Replacing Chemicals with Biology in Farming: Phasing out Highly Hazardous Pesticides with Agroecology.* Policy support is necessary from both national governments and international institutions. At the FAO International Symposium on agroecology in 2014, over 70 international scientists and scholars working in sustainable agriculture and food systems

[4] (i) McIntyre BD, Herren HR, Wakhungu J, Watson RT (eds). 2009.Agriculture at a Crossroads. IAASTD International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development Global Report. UNDP, FAO, UNEP, UNESCO, The World Bank. WHO, GEF. Island Press, Washington, D.C. http://www.unep.org/dewa/Assessments/Ecosystems/IAASTD/tabid/105853/Default.aspx

(ii) PANNA 2009. IAASTD Brief: Agroecology & Sustainable Development. http://www.panna.org/resources/iaastd-(ii) agriculture-crossroads.

[5] International Forum on Agriculture and Climate Change, Paris February 20th. http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/278192/icode/

called for a UN system-wide initiative on agroecology; and FAO has responded by initiating as a start, a series of regional seminars on agroecology.[6]

Some countries, like France, Brazil, Ecuador and Costa Rica have already taken policy steps to promote agroecology within their countries, as a way to support family farms, organic agriculture and food security. Other Latin American countries such as Cuba, Bolivia and Nicaragua have developed policy frameworks on agricultural rural development with an agroecological approach.[7] But for many other countries, awareness of agroecology is very low at the regulatory and policy level. This needs to be urgently addressed, and an alliance to phase out HHPs is an excellent opportunity for this.

Building an Alliance to Phase Out HHPs and Phase In Agroecology

Some significant work in phasing out HHPs and replacing them with agroecology has already been undertaken by some national governments with progressive laws or policies, and by organizations like FAO and PAN and a number of other NGOS and farmers organizations. However, there needs to be a dramatic upscaling in efforts. Countries and organizations can learn from one another, share experiences and resources and work to assist their farmers replace HHPs.

The Alliance should bring together all those organizations willing to contribute to phasing out HHPs, including UN agencies; countries; civil society organizations; farmer, community and indigenous organizations and networks; trade unions and agricultural workers organizations; scientists and researchers; and relevant private sector stakeholders, to build capacity and awareness, to identify HHPs and replace them with biological controls, biopesticides, and the raft of management, cultivational and mechanical techniques that constitute agroecological practices. There are extensive networks of farmers nationally, regionally and internationally with deep and broad knowledge of agroecological and organic farming, whose years of experience, both in farming without HHPs and in assisting other farmers, could help inform stakeholders' efforts to phase out HHPs.

There is a significant lack of extension services on appropriate ecosystem pest management; however, in most countries there are farmers' organizations, organic growers, and often academics, with expertise in ecosystem approaches to pest management that can provide valuable assistance to other farmers and researchers. Their efforts need to be assisted so that more farmers can be reached, more rapidly. The priority is setting policy frameworks that support agroecological research and extension, and collecting and transforming existing information and experiences into formats for practical guidance and allowing more people to put these into practice and adapt to their own situations.

The Global Alliance to Phase-out HHPs should mobilize stakeholders around a common yet flexible voluntary agenda and facilitate stakeholder interactions in order to strengthen and complement existing initiatives. The Alliance should base its work on:

- the SAICM texts, including to
    - "reduce dependency on pesticides" (Dubai Declaration, clause 6),
    - "phase out highly toxic pesticides" (Global Plan of Action, clause 8),
    - "prioritize the procurement of least hazardous pest control measures", specifically "non chemical alternative means of pest control" (Global Plan of Action, clauses 26, 27),
    - "base national decisions on highly toxic pesticides on an evaluation of their intrinsic hazards and anticipated local exposure to them";
- International Code on Pesticide Management.
- the Guidelines on HHPs currently being developed by the Joint Meeting on Pesticide Management (JMPM).
- The clear message from international agencies that agroecology is the way forward for sustainable agriculture and focus its efforts on replacing HHPs with agroecology.

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[6] See (i) http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/afns/en/?%EF%BF%BD= (ii) FAO 2015, **FINAL REPORT*for the* International Symposium on Agroecology *for Food Security and Nutrition*** 18 *and* 19 *September* 2014, Rome, Italy http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4327e.pdf

[7] FAO press release July 2, 2015 " Agroecologia es clave para erradicar el hambre en América Latina y el Caribe , http://www.fao.org/americas/noticias/ver/en/c/297484/