

NSP - Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs)

Introduction

A considerable proportion of the pesticides still being used in the world can be considered highly hazardous, because they have a high acute toxicity, have known chronic toxic effects even at very low exposure levels, or are very persistent in the environment or in organisms, for example.



In particular in developing countries, Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) may pose significant risks to human health or the environment, because risk reduction measures such as the use of personal protective equipment or maintenance and calibration of pesticide application equipment are not easily implemented or are not effective.

In this respect, the [Code of Conduct](#), in Article 7.5, stipulates that: *Prohibition of the importation, distribution, sale and purchase of highly hazardous pesticides may be considered if, based on risk assessment, risk mitigation measures or good marketing practices are insufficient to ensure that the product can be handled without unacceptable risk to humans and the environment.*

Pesticide risk reduction is therefore one of the priority areas in FAO's pesticide management programme. This was confirmed by the FAO Council, at its [131st session in 2006](#), which suggested that priority activities for FAO within [SAICM](#) "could include risk reduction, including the progressive ban on highly hazardous pesticides".

Subsequently, a [New Initiative for Pesticide Risk Reduction](#) was presented to the FAO Committee on Agriculture (COAG), the guiding governing body for the Agriculture Department, during its 20th Session in 2007.

During the COAG session, a Side Event was held on Highly Hazardous Pesticides, in order to give FAO Members and stakeholders, such as NGOs, the pesticide industry and public interest groups, the opportunity to exchange experiences and approaches on how to reduce the risks associated with the use of HHPs and how to implement the recommendations made by the FAO Council. Presentations and statements delivered during the Side Event on Highly Hazardous Pesticides are available upon request from Pesticide-Management@fao.org.

Identifying Highly Hazardous Pesticides

As a first step in the development of a risk reduction programme, the [FAO/WHO Joint Meeting on Pesticide Management \(JMPM\)](#) was requested to provide a working definition for highly hazardous pesticides. The JMPM, in their [2nd session in October 2008](#), recommended that highly hazardous pesticides should be defined as having one or more of the following characteristics:

- Pesticide formulations that meet the criteria of classes Ia or Ib of the WHO Recommended Classification of Pesticides by Hazard;
or
- Pesticide active ingredients and their formulations that meet the criteria of carcinogenicity Categories 1A and 1B of the Globally Harmonized System on Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS);
or
- Pesticide active ingredients and their formulations that meet the criteria of mutagenicity Categories 1A and 1B of the Globally Harmonized System on Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS);
or
- Pesticide active ingredients and their formulations that meet the criteria of reproductive toxicity Categories 1A and 1B of the Globally Harmonized System on Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS);
or
- Pesticide active ingredients listed by the Stockholm Convention in its Annexes A and B, and those meeting all the criteria in paragraph 1 of annex D of the Convention;
or
- Pesticide active ingredients and formulations listed by the Rotterdam Convention in its Annex III;
or
- Pesticides listed under the Montreal Protocol;
or
- Pesticide active ingredients and formulations that have shown a high incidence of severe or irreversible adverse effects on human health or the environment.

Priority activities for risk reduction from HHPs

The Joint Meeting on Pesticide Management also discussed which activities FAO and WHO should develop as a priority, with the aim to reduce the risks from highly hazardous pesticides. They recommended that:

- FAO and WHO, as a first step, should make available to countries information on HHPs based on the criteria above, update it periodically in cooperation with UNEP, and make it widely known;
- FAO, in collaboration with WHO, should invite governments and the pesticide industry to develop plans of action to reduce risks from HHPs by taking regulatory or technical action, either at the national or the regional level as appropriate, taking into account the work undertaken in existing MEAs such as the Stockholm Convention, Rotterdam Convention and the Montreal Protocol;
- FAO, in collaboration with WHO, should collect information on alternatives for HHPs, both reduced risk pesticides and other pest management approaches, in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, and share experiences among countries;

- FAO, in collaboration with WHO, should seek assistance from donors for countries which wish to act to reduce risks from HHPs with the aim of preparing, implementing and enforcing action plans and search for alternatives;
- FAO should mobilize internal and external resources in order to implement, as a priority, the recommendations of the FAO Council with respect to HHPs.

The JMPM explicitly noted that risk reduction from HHPs could include a progressive ban of these compounds.

Effective risk reduction from HHPs is mainly carried out at the national level, and national governments thus have the prime responsibility in this respect. Therefore, the JMPM recommended that FAO, in collaboration with WHO, invite national governments to ensure that at least the following risk reduction measures for HHPs are taken into account:

- Identify HHPs with help of the criteria explained above;
- Review the need for the use of HHPs, while simultaneously reviewing use conditions, mitigation measures and comparative risk assessment;
- Where a specific need is identified for a HHP and no viable alternatives are available, governments should be advised to take all the necessary precautions, mitigation measures and apply restrictions, that may include the use only under certain conditions or by specifically certified users, severe restrictions, or a possible phase-out;
- Promote the use of alternative pest management strategies and, in case they are not available, promote research for development of alternative strategies;
- Promote the substitution principle for HHPs;
- Ensure the provision of sufficient advice and information to users.

Useful links on highly hazardous pesticides

- [FAO/WHO Joint Meeting on Pesticide Management \(JMPM\)](#)
- [FAO/WHO Guidelines on Highly Hazardous Pesticides \(2016\)](#)
- [WHO Recommended Classification of Pesticides by Hazard](#)
- [Globally Harmonized System for the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals](#)
- [Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for certain hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in international trade](#)
- [Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants](#)
- [Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer](#)
- [Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety – Acutely Toxic Pesticides](#)
- [Booklet 2016 - Addressing Highly Hazardous Pesticides in Mozambique](#)