

## Pesticides in Agriculture

Increasing agricultural productivity among smallholder farmers is the objective of several agricultural and private sector development programmes supported by Sida. Protection of human health and the environment is also equally prioritized and must be taken into account. If programmes include access to and use of pesticides, an adequate system for assessing and managing risks for human health and the environment must be in place. The aim of this brief is to give guidance on management of Sida supported programmes where pesticides might be involved.

The use of pesticides has increased rapidly in low and middle income countries over the last decades, partly due to increased availability of chemicals on the market. Climate change influences the conditions for farming, which may contribute to additional increased use of pesticides. Properly applied, pesticides can be effective in managing harmful insects, fungi and weeds and help farmers to increase productivity and income.

Hazardous pesticides pose significant risks to human health and the environment, including in low income countries. UNEP estimates that as many as 200 000 people die each year from pesticide poisoning. Moreover, WHO reports that self-poisoning with pesticides accounts for about one third of the world's suicide cases. While inadequate data makes these assessments difficult, it is estimated that costs from improper use of pesticides are substantial in low income countries.

Several studies in low-income countries document poor knowledge among users and retailers, inadequate labelling of pesticides, low use of personal protective equipment and a lack of systems for management of disposed pesticides and containers. In addition, women and children's exposure to pesticides are often underestimated.

Another group exposed to risks is the large and growing group of hired farm workers. These groups are often not reached by extension and information campaigns, hence not made aware of the risks associated with pesticides.

While the legal framework for pesticide management in many low income countries to a large extent may be satisfactory, implementation and enforcement is often poor. This results in inadequate control of availability of substances on the market, how they are labelled and promoted, if the retailers have the appropriate competence, storage facilities etc. Hence, it is common to find pesticides, which have been banned or heavily restricted in Europe, being used by smallholder farmers in low income countries.

### GLOBAL FRAMEWORKS FOR PESTICIDE RISK MANAGEMENT

In 2015, the world's countries committed to achieving environmentally sound management of chemicals, by including it as a target in the **Sustainable Development Goal 12** on sustainable consumption and production.

FAO and WHO have developed the **International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management** (2014). It is a framework on pesticide management for public and private entities engaged in, or associated with, production, regulation and management of pesticides. It incorporates public health pesticides and vector control to broaden its scope beyond agricultural pesticides. The Code provides standards of conduct and serves as a point of reference in relation to sound pesticide life cycle management practices for government authorities, as well as the pesticide industry and other stakeholders.

The Code complements legally binding instruments such as the **Rotterdam Convention** on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, the **Stockholm Convention** on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the

**Basel Convention** on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, and voluntary mechanisms such as the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM).

**Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** is the globally agreed method for sustainable pest management and a means to reduce risks for negative impact from the use of pesticides.

## SIDA'S POSITION

There may be cases when Sida contributes to increased use of pesticides through funding directed to e.g. agriculture and rural development programmes; public health programmes; animal health programmes and emergency operations e.g. to control locust outbreaks or pests emerging as a result from natural hazards. This may also be the case for core support to organisations, budget support to sectors, support to challenge funds and private sector actors that may have operations related to the use of pesticides.

When there is a possibility that Sida's support might contribute to the use of pesticides, Sida should clarify and appraise the conditions under which this is done. The partner organisation should provide Sida with information that the following conditions are fulfilled:

1. National (cooperating country's/ies') legislation shall be applied.
2. The cooperation shall adhere to the FAO Code of Conduct for pesticide management and, when relevant, promote Integrated Pest Management (IPM).
3. Pesticides withdrawn (banned) from the EU market due to risks shall not be used in activities supported by Sida.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR APPRAISAL

When Sida appraises a proposal, which in some way may involve pesticides, the questions below can provide guidance:

- Has the partner presented if and how the initiative complies with national (cooperating country) legislation, including the country's commitments under the Rotterdam, Basel and Stockholm conventions?
- Has the partner presented if and how the initiative complies with the FAO Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management, including the promotion of Integrated Pest Management?

- Have any of the pesticides to be used in the programme been withdrawn (banned) in the EU?
- Has an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or a similar environmental assessment been done?
- Is there a plan to monitor and manage identified risks from pesticides?
- How has the partner ensured that sub-contractors monitor and manage pesticide related risks?
- Has the partner identified pesticide related health risks for the persons using the pesticides, their families (special attention should be given to women and children) or the local population?
- Will the support contribute to increased use of pesticides that are hazardous, persistent and/or bio-accumulative?
- Will the support contribute to the risk of spreading pesticides to surrounding water, air or food chains? This can be the result of, e.g., poor storage facilities or limited capacity to manage left-over pesticides.
- Will the support contribute to handling of pesticides by unskilled persons? Will the support contribute to training in pesticide management and provide protective equipment and proper storage facilities?
- Has the partner considered applying alternative approaches to control pests, e.g., crop rotation, alternative crops, or new technologies?

### When negotiating the agreement and during the implementation phase, Sida may consider:

- The possibility to include capacity development support for health and environmental risk management.
- To include requirements to manage and monitor pesticide related risks in the agreement.
- To require complementary reporting from the program from an independent third party.

*For more information and for references please contact Sida's unit for policy support.*