

Questions during Mini Hearing on "Obsolute pesticides"
29 June 2010 - European Parliament

1. Questions Michael Valentine, ISTC Moscow:

- To add to Richard Thompson's (FAO) suggestions and Andrew Murphy's (EU Commission) frameworks for mobilization of EC funding, can EC join the G8 pledge after declaration during the recent summit in Canada, to provide aid to health of mothers and infants in world's poor countries? Now there is heightened interest in these issues.
- The OPs issue affects mothers and infants in poorest countries. Accumulation in breast milk and fatty tissue, OPs shown to affect endocrine system in newborns and infants.
- Organizations supported by EC – International Science and Technology Center (ISTC) Moscow and Science and Technology Center of Ukraine Kiev, have been supported by EC for over 16 years, framework exists to channel funding to institutes who can support works in OPs.
- G8 agreed that funding supplied to ISTC and STCU for funding can meet pledge commitments
- Example of project – EC funded project in Kyrgyzstan, through ISTC, to develop inventory of OPs under responsibility of Ministry of Agriculture. This is the first step of process – “foundation for house” as stated by John Vijgen, IHPA.

Answer Andrew Murphy of EU Commission:

I cannot answer these questions as I am not knowledgeable on the G8 issues and on the role of ISTC.

2. Question Christophe Rittersberger, TREDI:

- Will EU set up a fund (750 Million €) to finance elimination of OP?
 - GTZ does so, for example in Tanzania
 - Switzerland does that for Bhutan
 - The Netherlands did so in Africa
- This would be a huge step forward to get things going.

Answer Andrew Murphy of EU Commission:

EU Commission is not the only player. All stakeholders should contribute to the solution. Many times bilateral support of often much faster.

3. Questions Elena Manvelyan, AWHHE, Armenia:

- How and by whom will the risk assessment be done regarding the health effects of the environmental pollution of local population.
- How will the local population be informed and involved in decision making progress about health protection and in finding sound solution.

- How and by whom the risks to agriculture will be assessed as the location of the burial ground is only 25km removed from the main agricultural region Ararat Valley. The water pollution from the burial may reach the river Hrazdan which feeds that irrigates this valley.
- Can the EU play a role in enabling AWHHE to continue and strengthen its role as a watch dog but also a good partner in finding the best solution and achieving public support.

Answer Bill Hanlon, OSCE Armenia:

The efforts by civil society in Armenia were instrumental in bringing the dangers of Nubarashen to the national spotlight. This is an excellent example of how important NGOs, such as AWHHE, are in addressing these problems. Therefore, it is very important to recognize that civil society in Armenia has a key role to play as the Nubarashen landfill is assessed and eventually neutralized.

Answer John Vijgen, IHPA:

Risk assessment of soil polluted directly downstream of the burial site will be done by FAO specialist in Armenia. He has made a sampling plan, and samples will be analyzed in Armenia and at certified laboratories in the EU.

4. Anonymous questions:

- A lot of figures have been cited by the panelists to describe global or local size of the problem. Do the panelists consider in their figures only the stockpiles of the pesticides or also the tons of contaminated soils, materials, wastes ... to be disposed? This is important to assess the necessary budget.
- Remark: Obsolete pesticides are not nuclear wastes. They are far from our eyes, noses, but could be not so far from our plates, if we consider that they one day or another enter/contaminate the EU food chain.

Answer John Vijgen, IHPA:

Yes that is right the figures cited are only of the stockpiles and of course we will have to deal with contaminated soils and building materials too. Often works take place in phases. For example Moldova has been working for many years on the obsolete pesticide waste elimination and recently has started to deal with contaminated land. It may be clear that both issues have to be dealt with, as the farmer who owns land, can still not use his land when the waste is eliminated and the soil is still polluted. So both steps are needed and after the soil has been cleaned then farmers can bring their soil into use again.

5. Question Stephan Robinson, Green Cross, Switzerland:

FAO has a life cycle management approach, which includes inventory, safeguarding and destruction. However, even after going through these steps you remain with serious pollution in form of contaminated storehouses and soils. Should the FAO life cycle management approach not also include these elements?

Answer Richard Thompson, FAO:

You are correct that contaminated soils and buildings may represent a high risk and require intervention. FAO's process does actually consider this. The process for addressing obsolete pesticides

initiates with a thorough inventory which aims to capture data not just on pesticides in stores but also pesticide contaminated materials such as buried pesticides, contaminated fertilizers, contaminated soil and buildings. The inventory also captures information on the risks that the materials pose to the environment and public health. The next step in the process is a comparative risk assessment to identify the sites and wastes that pose the greatest risk. This assessment allows a safeguarding strategy and disposal strategy to be developed that can focus on reducing the highest risks as quickly and effectively as possible. Dependent on the assessment, this could involve a number of interventions including repackaging and destruction of pesticides, but also remediation or sequestration of contaminated soils and buildings. The strategy should focus on maximizing the risk reduction with the available funds. In parallel with addressing the legacy of obsolete pesticides it is important to help countries prevent further accumulations in the future. FAO's "Life Cycle" approach uses the International code of Conduct for the Distribution and Use of Pesticides as the basis for building national capacities in pest and pesticide management.