

**AFRICAN UNION**  
**INTER AFRICAN PHYTOSANITARY COUNCIL**  
**Yaounde, Cameroon, P.O. Box 4170**

**Project for the Creation of a Special Fund for Phytosanitary  
Chemicals in Africa**

**By Dr Nazaire NKOUKA,**  
Scientific Secretary of IAPSC/AU  
And  
**Benoit BOUATO,**  
Phytosanitary Information Specialist, IAPSC/AU

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## **Introduction**

The Inter African Phytosanitary Council is one of nine regional organizations created in 1956, pursuant to Article VIII (1) and (2) of the FAO Convention which provided for the setting up of regional phytosanitary centres to relay FAO activities in their respective regions.

After African nations achieved their independence, the Inter African Phytosanitary Council became an integral part of the OAU, as its specialized body in the phytosanitary domain. Consequently, the IAPSC was assigned specific missions by OAU Member States through such legal instruments as the Council of Ministers Resolution (CM/Res.)119 (IX) on the African Phytosanitary Convention in 1967; and Article 46 (I) of the Lagos Plan of Action in 1991, etc. More recently, within the framework of NEPAD, the IAPSC has been identified as one of the instruments for the achievement of NEPAD agricultural goals.

Over the years, other missions have been assigned the IAPSC by its general assemblies. For instance, during the 20<sup>th</sup> General Assembly that held in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, a new common African plant protection strategy and a new mandate were adopted.

Major functions of the IAPSC include strengthening the capacity of phytosanitary services of Member States, coordinating, ensuring a follow-up for, and assessing phytosanitary activities in Africa.

## **IAPSC Vision for 2020**

Plant protection is considered as one of the determining factors in the development and improvement of sustainable agriculture in Africa. It is therefore a key factor in the IAPSC 2020 strategy and vision for Africa which highlights the following three fundamental elements:

- 1 – Availability of sufficient and quality food and feed at any given time for the entire population of the African continent.
- 2 – Increasing African agricultural exports while at the same time ensuring that they meet world market standards at competitive prices.
- 3 – Adopting environmentally acceptable plant protection policies and practices that are safe for human health and do not impede trade and/or exchange in plants and plant products.

## **Context**

In the exercise of its mandate, the IAPSC is constantly faced with the problem of pesticides used in plant protection, given that it is in agriculture that the greatest quantities of pesticides are used.

Today, agriculture has become the greatest factor of pollution in Africa, in the same way as industry in the West. Massive population growth is forcing Africans to produce ever more food in order to feed everyone. Mechanization of agriculture and use of chemicals to enhance

production are the only alternatives at moment to achieve this objective. Unfortunately, these alternatives, when not properly applied, create more problems. Thus, the accumulation of excess, unused pesticides on the African continent is becoming a major concern for human and animal health and a threat to the environment which needs to be addressed with urgency.

The IAPSC is therefore concerned with avoiding the disastrous consequences of the chaotic supply and circulation of pesticides and is striving to reduce the excess pesticide stocks which constitute veritable time bombs threatening the continent. The accumulation of excess pesticides in Africa is a fluid (progressive) phenomenon: in the absence of a safe and environment-friendly means of eliminating them, the stockpiles are only increasing.

An FAO survey published at the beginning of June 1996 showed that 20.000 tons of pesticides had become obsolete in the few African countries where an inventory had already been carried out. Six years after, the situation had evolved: there was now a total of 50.000 tons of obsolete pesticides to be destroyed in 2002, following the still partial inventory published by FAO at the end of 2001.

Over the years, all sorts of pesticides have been imported by developing countries, in the form of development assistance donations from either organizations or governments. According to the international NGO *Pesticide Action Network (PAN)*, the known total amount of Africa's pesticide imports is an average \$672 million per year. Yet at least 40% of this (an equivalent of \$269 million) is probably not used.

### **Consequences of the accumulation of chemicals**

The overwhelming scientific evidence of the harmful effects of chemicals on health and on the environment has given rise to justified concern within the public. The numerous pesticides-related accidents and diseases which occur each year throughout the world, especially in developing countries, have finally convinced the international community on the necessity for urgent action.

Indeed, WHO statistics show that about 3.000.000 cases of serious pesticide poisoning are reported yearly throughout the world. More than 80% of these cases occur in developing countries, and between 25.000 and 75.000 deaths result from this poisoning. Each year, about 750.000 persons develop a chronic disease, such as cancer, after exposure to pesticides.

Some of these chemical products are so toxic that only a few ounces would be enough to poison thousands of people or to contaminate extensive areas. These highly toxic and persistent substances include DDT, dieldrin and HCH (hexachlorocyclohexane).

In the Montreal Protocol, a number of scientific studies agree on the fact that *“emissions of chlorofluorocarbons, methyl chloride, methyl bromide and other substances produced by man are the cause of the depletion of the ozone layer: millions of ozone molecules are destroyed every minute, thus increasing the quantity of harmful ultraviolet rays reaching the earth's surface”*. As a result, humans, animals and plants are exposed to radiation that increases the risks of skin cancer and cataract reduces agricultural productivity and greatly disrupts the oceans' food chain.

To illustrate this situation, we refer to the following excerpt from a report prepared by Mr Lassina Traore, Minister of Agriculture and ASP Coordinator for Mali: *“Mali has carried out*

*a number of non-exhaustive inventories which enabled the inventory of about 270 tons of obsolete pesticides, 1617 contaminated containers and 40.000 tons of contaminated soil. In the localities of Tin-Essako and Anefis, two permanent springs and goat milk have been polluted by dieldrin, thereby contaminating the food chain...”*

### **International Provisions aimed at limiting risks from chemicals**

A number of international instruments have been put in place by the international community to manage chemical risks. These instruments include:

#### *Conventions:*

- the Basle Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes
- the Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure,
- the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs),
- the Bamako Convention to prohibit import of hazardous wastes and to control their transboundary movement in Africa.

#### *Protocols:*

- the Montreal Protocol on ozone-depleting substances,
- the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Other instruments are:

The Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS);

The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM);

The FAO International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides;

The London directives on the exchange of information on chemicals involved in international trade, etc.

The commitment of the international community was confirmed at the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development which in its Plan of Action set as a goal to see to it that by 2020 all chemicals should be produced and used in such a way that their harmful effects on human health and on the environment be reduced to the minimum.

African countries which do not possess sufficient resources to monitor and control the importation, production and utilization of these chemicals in accordance with these international provisions, and are unable to handle the incidents related to these products, are particularly vulnerable to the chemical risk

Furthermore, very few of these countries have ratified the international instruments on chemicals (as of 23 March 2004, only 18 countries had ratified the Rotterdam Convention and 12 the Stockholm Convention)<sup>1</sup>, for them to be binding on their territory. The other

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<sup>1</sup> - Source : websites of the PIC and POP Conventions

instruments, which are not legally restrictive, though indispensable for the management of risks connected with chemicals, are not equally being implemented. It should be mentioned here that most of these conventions are already in force.

### **Causes of pesticides accumulation**

The greatest causes of the accumulation of pesticides include major droughts and locust infestations. However, permanent causes are connected to the weakness of the prevention system (regulations; control and training infrastructure; awareness raising; etc).

Most of these stockpiles are remains of pesticides supplied within the framework of external assistance programmes. According to the FAO, the accumulation of unused pesticide stockpiles is due to the following reasons:

- banning of pesticides that are still in stock;
- prolonged storage of products with a limited shelf life;
- difficulty in foreseeing infestations of pests, such as locusts;
- excessive donations (inappropriate, ill-timed and uncoordinated);
- late arrival of donations (after agricultural campaign);
- poor/insufficient storage facilities;
- absence of trained personnel in the management of stockpiles.

### **Cost estimates for cleaning up pesticide stockpiles in Africa**

The cost of the elimination and destruction of pesticides is about \$3 per kilogram or litre. Coupled with inventory, repackaging and transport costs, we can estimate the overall disposal cost at \$10 per kilogram/litre of pesticide. The cleaning-up of 50.000 tons of pesticides in Africa would therefore require the sum of \$300 million.

In the mid 90s, it had been estimated that \$100 million was needed, for Africa alone, for the disposal of the 20.000 tons of pesticides that had been listed then. After the 2001 inventory, the African Union was asking for only “\$200 million to transport and destroy this dangerous stockpile” of the 50.000 tons.

Initiated in 2000, the pesticide disposal programme “Africa Stockpiles Programme” (ASP), is expected to phase out over a period of 12-15 years, and will cost approximately \$250 million. The clean-up, prevention and capacity-building comprising the first phase of the programme will cost about \$70 million.

### **Activities already carried out**

To date, less than 3,000 tons of obsolete pesticides have been eliminated in Africa and in the Middle-East, with funding essentially from governments and aid agencies. As a matter of fact, the clean-up operation to date has been more or less the timid deeds of donors such as Germany, the United States, the Netherlands, Sweden and the FAO. Industry, through CropLife, is also involved (about 30%) essentially in the inventory, repackaging, transport, and disposal (incinerating), as well as in preventive activities such as regulation, training and awareness raising.

## Solutions envisaged

A group made up of international, intergovernmental and industrial organizations, and NGOs has been set up to work out a project to clean up these stockpiles and transport them to Europe for destruction at appropriate sites. This project is known as the Africa Stockpiles Programme (ASP). Under the aegis of NEPAD (New Partnership for African Development), meetings have been held to map out and finalize the programme and examine the problems specific to the 7 countries that will be involved in the first clean-up and disposal operations to be carried out during the first phase of the programme (2004-2007)

This initiative has already received financial assistance from the Global Environment Facility and from the Canadian Consultant Trust Fund of the World Bank and from other diverse sources.

Representatives from South Africa, from 6 other African countries involved in the first phase (Ethiopia, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Tanzania and Tunisia), and from a dozen regional and international organizations met for two weeks in South Africa. At this meeting a programme schedule was drawn up for the cleaning up of obsolete pesticide stockpiles and for prevention against the accumulation of new stockpiles. Each delegation worked on aspects connected with its specific problem, notably on:

- range and nature of the obsolete pesticides stockpiles and clean-up modalities;
- technical and financial necessary for the clean-up campaign and for putting in place preventive measures.

The participants from regional and international organizations promised to provide the support, and the technical and political expertise needed for the effective takeoff of the Programme. In addition to NEPAD, other organizations present at the meeting included the African Union, the World Bank, the FAO, the WHO, CropLife International and the World Wide Fund.

NEPAD, as the socio-economic programme of the Africa Union, strives to apply African solutions to African problems, eventually with assistance from partners. The African Union has endorsed NEPAD's Environmental Action Plan, drawn up under the auspices of African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN). By including the management of pesticides and chemicals in the results of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the ASP automatically becomes one of the priorities of NEPAD.

In addition to all this, the Inter African Phytosanitary Council, specialized organ of the African Union, has developed a prevention and plant protection strategy based on the "Integrated Management" method. Prevention consists in the reinforcement and harmonization of phytosanitary regulations, as well as raising awareness on good agricultural practices.

Unfortunately, these prevention and integrated management operations which are supposed to efficiently contribute to limiting the accumulation of pesticide stockpiles in Africa lack a permanent funding source. Hence the working problems encountered by certain initiatives with a crucial role in the management of pesticides, such as the IAPSC, the Sahel Pesticides Committee (CSP), the Central African Pesticides Committee (CPAC), etc.

## Analysis

From the preceding facts, it is obvious that obsolete pesticides have been accumulating in Africa for the past forty years. From the beginning, this situation was perpetrated either through ignorance or for selfish aims. It is only about ten years now since the international community has become aware of the gravity of this pollution, which does not only end with Africa, but is also affecting the ozone layer, our common universal inheritance, indispensable for life on earth. In spite of this awareness, what has been done is still very insignificant with regard to the gravity of the situation: after 10 years of efforts, less than 3,000 of the 50.000 tons of obsolete pesticides have been cleaned up. While these efforts are being made, other stockpiles continue to be accumulated: as we pointed out earlier, between two inventories (only five years apart), 30.000 tons of obsolete pesticides were added!

This trend can not be easily reversed: since use of chemicals is still necessary in certain cases, pesticides will continue to be manufactured (70.000 new molecules per year) and sold (more than \$1.6 billion turnover on pesticides). To bring the situation under control, we need to look for other viable and lasting solutions for the cleaning up of the stockpiles and the rationalization of the supply of these chemicals in Africa in order to consolidate the efforts so far made.

The first opening is directed towards the major importers of chemicals in Africa. Those who are responsible for the accumulation of pesticide stockpiles should not turn a blind eye to the search for solutions. But what is most difficult in this appalling situation is to establish responsibilities. Once this is done, those who are guilty must be made to fulfil their obligations.

Some of the proposals put forward during meetings devoted to looking for solutions to this problem have carried a lot of doubts:

- The Global Environment Facility (GEF), for instance, promised the ASP a contribution of \$25 million for the first phase of the programme (estimated at \$70 million), *“providing that:*
  - a) *co-funding of the remaining \$45 million is assured*
  - b) *participating countries ratify the Stockholm Convention on persistent organic pollutants”<sup>2</sup>*
- Dr Chris Waller, project head of CropLife’s “Obsolete Pesticides”, declared that *“CropLife is willing to contribute to this pesticide clean-up operation only for those stockpiles originating from its members...”*

This is a vague statement, without any indication as to the selection or identification method for pesticides from the said members.

## Conclusion

With regard to the pesticides problem, the following scenario has become cyclical: *“pest outbreak is reported – countries involved appeal for supply of pesticides – pesticides are donated – same countries appeal for assistance for disposal of stockpiles”*, and so on, and so forth. It is obvious that if this trend persists, Africa will remain in the rather uncomfortable position of chronic beggar in front of complacent, increasingly demanding donors, in spite of

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<sup>2</sup> - See ASP website

being aware of the threat that this pollution of Africa represents to the globe as a whole. From the foregoing, it can logically be concluded that the problem of obsolete pesticides stockpiles in Africa can not be solved if an automatic and durable funding strategy is not combined with the efforts already being made.

The contribution of the IAPSC to a search for lasting solutions to the problem of chemicals in Africa falls directly in line with NEPAD's fundamental principle of "providing African solutions for African problems". It is in this context that the IAPSC is proposing the creation of fund known as the **"SPECIAL FUND FOR PHYTOSANITARY CHEMICALS IN AFRICA (SF-PCA)**.

### **Functioning of the SF-PCA**

#### *1- Setting up of fund*

- Given that chemicals entering Africa are by purchase (an average of \$672 million per year, for agricultural pesticides alone), it would only be honest and legitimate, during transactions, to provide for the eventual destruction of these products in case of non-utilization. As such, a sales tax, of about 1.5% levied on the chemicals manufacturing firms, should be deducted for the building up of this fund. In this way, those primarily responsible for the pollution would automatically contribute to the clean-up and prevention operations. The problem of identifying the originators of this pollution would no longer be posed.
- Another funding source would be donations and bequests from organizations and donors as contribution to the protection of global environment in general and in particular, that of Africa (a continent considered by many environmentalists as one of the ecological lungs of the globe), victim of an unprecedented industrial pollution.

#### *2- Utilization of fund*

- After 10 years of efforts, with the present funding methods, the international community has only been able to clean up about 3.000 tons of obsolete pesticides. Yet during these ten years, sales of agricultural pesticides have grossed about \$6.720 billion (\$672 million/year X 10). If the 1.5% tax were deducted from this sum, it would provide about \$110 million. This money could legitimately be used to clean up Africa, better than what has been done up to this point at a price of lots of sacrifices and humiliation for Africans. This fund could therefore primarily serve in cleaning up the stockpiles of obsolete pesticides.
- Prevention being an important link in the accumulation of stockpiles, the resulting support activities (strengthening and harmonization of phytosanitary regulations, reinforcing pesticide control and treatment facilities, training, awareness raising, etc), should be guaranteed. Consequently, pesticides management structures in Africa – the Inter African Phytosanitary Council (IAPSC), the Sahel Pesticides Committee (CSP), the Central African Pesticides Committee (CPAC), NGOs, etc - would benefit from this fund to successfully carry out their missions.