

Press Release, Friday April 1<sup>st</sup> 2011

**Syngenta's bestseller 'Gramoxone' on the way to be listed as Severely Hazardous Pesticide Formulation by the Rotterdam Convention.**

**Rome, April 1st 2011. The Chemical Review Committee of the Rotterdam Convention – a group of 31 designated experts – agreed to recommend that pesticides containing Paraquat (20% or above) should be listed in Annex III to the Rotterdam Convention. The proposal was made by Burkina Faso due to the high amount of poisonings related to the use of the Syngenta product Gramoxone Super (Paraquat 20%). There is hope that through this step the countless Paraquat victims could be significantly reduced worldwide.**

In a survey from Burkina Faso, 153 pesticide formulations and 296 poisoning incidences from field application were identified. Gramoxone Super was responsible for 20% of intoxications. Most interviewed farmers in Burkina Faso are illiterate and not able to read label instructions. In many cases, little or no personal protective equipment (PPE) was worn. The combination of chemical cartridge respirator, gloves, boots, suit and glasses as required on the label was used only in 0.3% of cases. The symptoms reported by the victims included skin burns, fever, dizziness, loss of consciousness, breathing difficulties, vision troubles, vomiting and others.

Abundant documentation proving that conditions in Burkina Faso are similar to those in other countries and regions was made available to the UN Committee. For example, in El Salvador an average of 344 intoxications due to Gramoxone are reported per year from 2005-2010.

*"The sale of paraquat products under such conditions are in any way a breach of the FAO Code of Conduct and should be stopped immediately by the pesticide industry",* says Sarojeni Rengam from the Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific. Paraquat is already banned in the European Union and Switzerland as well as in other countries.

The committee took the decision despite the opposition by Syngenta. The Swiss pesticide manufacturer and top Paraquat seller, tried several times during the meeting to downplay the negative impacts of their product and to persuade the committee not to recommend the listing of Paraquat in Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention. The UN Committee's position was not affected by these lobby attempts.

*"Syngenta's lobbying is irresponsible as it tries to deprive developing countries of their right to know more about the dangers of Paraquat and to take an informed decision about import restrictions for this severely hazardous pesticide",* says François Meienberg from the Berne Declaration.

When Paraquat (20% and above) is listed as a severely hazardous pesticide, all countries will have to give their Prior Informed Consent (PIC) before such products could be imported. Experience shows that many developing countries use this opportunity to reject the import of hazardous pesticides.

As a next step, the Committee will draft a Decision Guidance Document which will be discussed at the next Committee meeting and then be forwarded to the Conference of Parties for a final decision in 2013.

**More information:**

The Berne Declaration, the Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific and the Pesticide Action Network UK published today a new update of the **Report** "Paraquat – Unacceptable health risks for users". It can be downloaded at [www.stop-paraquat.net](http://www.stop-paraquat.net).

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**Note:**

The Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade is an international treaty that addresses the importation of hazardous chemicals. It includes provision for the exchange of information and labelling. Importantly, Parties to the Convention are able to not accept the import of chemicals listed in the treaty. More Information at <http://www.pic.int>