



Pesticide procurement

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This overview aims to introduce Commission officers, delegations and policy advisers to issues concerned with the procurement of pesticides and to set out current guidance to good practice.

Buying dangerous products

The use of chemical pesticides in developing countries is increasing, with products purchased for use in agriculture, food storage, public health programmes and for veterinary purposes. Nevertheless, pesticides are hazardous chemicals and the qualities of environmental persistence, high toxicity or impacts on non-target pests combine with the conditions of use in developing countries to cause significant health and environmental problems. Some of these problems can be avoided by careful attention to good practice when purchasing pesticides.

An overall strategy

The European Commission is committed to improving the pest management practices used under programmes which it funds. A new approach encompasses establishing control over pesticides; reducing reliance on pesticides; and promoting Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies and methods.

Principles for purchasing pesticides

Good practice begins at the point of analysing the pest problem and identifying the right approach for the problem. In many cases chemical pesticides will be a favoured option, but consideration should be given to alternative strategies. If pesticide use is unavoidable, it is important that the products purchased for use in developing countries are of acceptable quality, are suitably packaged and labelled, and that the users will be trained in safe use practices. Good procurement practices can help achieve these objectives.

New guidelines for purchase

All pesticide requirements should be put to tender, and a task force of development agencies, industry and NGOs has drawn up basic standards, which were incorporated into Provisional Tender Guidelines published by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO) in 1994. The European Commission has developed its own Tender Guidelines, based on this model. All pesticides purchased or donated using European

Commission funding should only be procured in compliance with its guidelines.

The way forward

This paper explains the different routes by which pesticides can be procured in aid programmes, draws attention to standards for purchasing pesticides, and provides contacts and further resources.



Safe pesticide use requires proper protective clothing and equipment

“Some pesticides are just too dangerous to be used safely under the conditions of use in many developing countries”

Prof. Hermann Waibel, Pesticides Policy Project, adviser to the Global IPM Facility

Pesticides and development aid

Many ACP countries have limited infrastructure for safely managing pesticides, and good procurement practices are an essential step in building local capacity. Development agencies can work with governments to establish higher standards for procurement and use of pesticides and monitor their own practices.

Use of development funds in purchasing pesticides can arise in various ways: projects may include funds to purchase pesticides; sectoral import programmes may include pesticides; common activities which are funded on a regional basis may be purchasing pesticides; general support for inputs to agriculture, such as fertilisers and high-yielding seed varieties, may lead to increased use of pesticides; Stabex funds are generally used in the agricultural sector and can fund pesticide purchases; emergency funding is used to buy pesticides, for example for locust control. Some pesticides are donated directly, but this practice should be avoided.

Tender procedures raise standards

Good tender procedures are part of an approach to phase out the most hazardous pesticides; improve management aspects, including storage and distribution; establish advertising standards; and increase hazard awareness. Training costs for small scale farmers and other users needs to be part of the price of using pesticides.

Any purchase of pesticides should follow the principles and practices set out in the European Commission Tender Guidelines or the FAO Provisional Tender Guidelines (the ‘Tender Guidelines’). These aim to ensure that pesticides purchased with development aid funds will avoid common problems arising in developing countries, such as supply of sub-standard and inappropriate formulations, contained in unsuitable packaging of poor quality, and with inadequate labelling. The guidelines also help ensure that quantities purchased will be used, and so avoid over-supply, and the related problems of wastage or obsolete stocks. Purchasers must insist that suppliers provide pesticides of the required technical quality which are suitable for use under local conditions.

In using development funds for pesticide purchases, donors should ensure that the authority responsible for storage and supply to end users operates a system of records of receipt and release of pesticides, that good storage management practices are followed, and that end users will be trained and equipped to take safety precautions.

Tender Guidelines also set out the information to be required from bidders, such as human and environmental toxicity data. They describe ways to process tender submissions; advise on undertakings required of successful bidders; and define sampling and analysis procedures to be complied with. They provide examples and checklists of requirements.

The basics of a pesticide

The term pesticide covers any product used to control pests: insects, weeds or diseases. A pesticide is made up of a number of components. The **active ingredient** is the biologically active part of the pesticide, and it is essential that this component is known and checked against hazard guidelines. The **formulation** is a combination of the active ingredient with various other ingredients which make the product usable and effective. This is the form in which the product is bought. The **product** is the pesticide formulation in the form in which it is packaged and sold: all products will have a **trade name**: the same active ingredient may have several different trade names. The additional ingredients are known as **inerts**, but these chemicals can be harmful, although they are subject to less regulation. The European Commission Tender Guidelines require attention to all formulants, but there is a lack of good data about many inerts.

Good practices for procurement

To ensure quality, safety and compliance with good practices, the following points must be satisfied when purchasing pesticides:

The **technical quality** of the product should be of high standard, as demonstrated in a full technical report (requested from the manufacturer), including analyses of the active ingredient with data from all physical and chemical tests. Technical reports must be performed by independent laboratories which follow Good Laboratory Practices.

Packaging of the product must be adapted to the farm size, it must be of appropriate quality, designed to prevent re-use, and take into account disposal after use.

Labelling of products must be in appropriate local languages as well as an international language.

Hazardous formulations should not be used in developing countries. This includes WHO Ia, Ib and preferably Class II (see below). Some types of formulation present greater hazard. Types include emulsifiable concentrates (EC), wettable powders (WP), suspension concentrates (SC), water dispersible granules (WG) and others. It can, for example, be more dangerous to use a WP or EC with a low concentration of active ingredient than an SC or WG with a higher concentration.

Results of poor procurement

Poor procurement practices which are not backed up by good training in management, distribution and use of pesticides, can lead to a host of problems. Pesticide donations often by-pass or ignore established standards. Past donor practices, and poor procurement policies, have led to thousands of tonnes of pesticides which are out of date or obsolete and now need to be disposed of. Good procurement practices are an essential part of preventing these problems.



Photo: FAO

Pesticide dump in Yemen

End user protection must be considered. The risk to small scale farmers and agricultural workers is high. Good practice requires users to wear appropriate clothing, masks, gloves and boots. Risk is greatest during mixing and loading where good measuring devices are needed. Risk is increased through poor quality spray equipment, lack of protective clothing and use by untrained operators. Information on decontamination should be available to users, and antidotes available in case of poisoning.

Major pesticide manufacturers have adopted product stewardship programmes. Detailed requirements covering stewardship aspects must be specified in the call for tender and taken into account when accepting a tender.

The pesticide should be registered for use in the country and for the specified use. As a limited number of products are registered in Africa, manufacturers should be asked to provide data on efficacy for the specific use and data covering field trials in the country and countries with similar ecological conditions.

What pesticides? Reducing risk

International standards help establish good practice, or provide guidance on pesticides to avoid.

“Donors have to ensure that all pesticide procurement follows the basic internationally accepted rules of good practice”

The FAO Code

The provisions of the *International Code on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides* must be followed. Each of the provisions of the Code is supported by technical guidelines available from the FAO.

National registration schemes

Until recently, most ACP countries had no legislation governing pesticide import, distribution and use. While some countries operate only a list of permitted active ingredients, others now have a registration system which ensures that each formulation of a pesticide is registered for use on a specific crop. Pesticide registration should require submission of a data package and local testing of the product. However implementation can be a problem.

The most hazardous pesticides

The WHO Recommended Classification of Pesticides by Hazard and Guidelines to Classification ranks pesticides according to acute toxicity: Class Ia—extremely hazardous; Class Ib—highly hazardous; Class II—moderately hazardous; Class III—slightly hazardous; Table 5—Unlikely to present acute hazard in normal use. Pesticide formulations that fall into Class Ia or Ib should not be used by small scale farmers, untrained or unprotected workers in developing countries. The FAO and many development agencies also now recommend that WHO class II be avoided.

International regulations

International initiatives have been introduced to reduce certain pesticide problems, or alert governments to bans and severe restrictions placed on pesticides by other countries. Purchasers of pesticides must be aware of:

The Rotterdam Convention, agreed in 1998, establishes the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure to help governments in developing countries restrict imports of certain banned or

Key points

- ❖ All pest management options should be considered before deciding that chemical pesticides are the best option
- ❖ Tender Guidelines provide the basis for purchases of pesticides for use in developing countries
- ❖ Pesticides purchased must be registered in the country, must not be hazardous, and end users must be able to meet safe use standards

severely restricted pesticides and identify severely hazardous pesticide formulations. Initially, PIC covers 22 pesticides (see PMN 5), but more will be identified for inclusion.

The Montreal Protocol includes the ozone-depleting pesticide methyl bromide, widely used for soil and storage fumigation in developing countries. Developing countries are required to phase out methyl bromide by 2015.

Persistent organic pollutants (POPs) are the subject of Convention negotiations to phase out production and use of these highly environmentally-persistent chemicals which to date include nine pesticides. Many developing countries still use DDT to control disease vectors.

Harmonisation of classification, packaging and labelling is being developed under the auspices of the OECD, and internationally agreed standards will need to be followed.

A role for donors

Donors can play an important role in improving control over pesticides, including:

- ❖ considering, and encouraging counterparts to fully consider, all pest management requirements and possible control options (IPM, training, biological controls);
- ❖ acquiring a general familiarity with recognised standards of pesticide procurement as set out in the Tender Guidelines;
- ❖ ensuring that projects or programmes follow international good practice in the event of procurement of pesticides;

- ❖ assisting in building capacity in ACP countries to manage and regulate pesticides.

Conclusions

Procurement of pesticides must be open and transparent, following standard international tender procedures. Mistakes can lead to the purchase of inappropriate, hazardous or poor quality products and excessive quantities. The Tender Guidelines cannot alone address all the health and environmental problems of pesticide use in developing countries, but provide a basis for avoiding mistakes and building the capacity to manage pesticides.

Resources

Provisional guidelines on tender procedures for the procurement of pesticides, FAO, Rome, 1994.

European Commission Tender Guidelines

International code of conduct on the distribution and use of pesticides (amended version), FAO, Rome, 1989.

Guidelines for aid agencies on pest and pesticide management. DAC guidelines on aid and environment, No. 6. OECD, Paris 1995.

WHO Recommended Classification of Pesticides by Hazard and Guidelines to Classification 1996-1997. WHO/PCS/96.3. WHO, Geneva, 1996.

Prior Informed Consent information can be obtained from the UNEP Chemicals and the FAO websites: <http://irptc.unep.ch/pic> and <http://www.fao.org/pic>



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This briefing is one of a series prepared by Pesticide Action Network UK (PAN UK), which is responsible for its contents, as consultants to DGVIII of the EC. PAN UK is an independent charity working to reduce pesticide problems in developing countries. Its quarterly journal *Pesticides News* reports on pesticides and IPM.

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