

The Pesticide Trail - A Schools Project

The Pesticide Action Network **UK** were supported by the Environmental Action Fund to produce the following educational resources:

1. an educational video for secondary schools designed to fit the school curricula for citizenship and science
2. a school pesticide audit and guide

1. The Video

The video consists of seven individual units, each of which highlights a particular area of our concern about the use of pesticides. Each unit takes the form of an investigation in which school students have been filmed interviewing key people (farmers, regulators, pesticides exposure sufferers, anti-pesticide campaigners, supermarkets, representatives of the agrochemical industry). Through these interviews the students uncover pertinent stories illustrating key concerns. The video will come with a resource pack containing classroom activities and briefing papers to accompany each unit. The units are

- * Pesticides and Food. This unit explores the use of pesticides in the production of food. It includes interviews with Friends of the Earth campaigner Sandra Bell, Lord Whitty (Cabinet minister responsible for pesticides), a representative from the Crop Protection Association (industry body representing the agrochemical industry), organic farmers, and the Coop supermarket.
- * Pesticides and Health. This unit explores the link between exposure to pesticides and ill health. It includes interviews with three people who have experienced ill-health as a result of their exposure to pesticides and Dr. David Coggan (head of the committee responsible for advising government on pesticide residue levels permissible in food)
- * Pesticides and Water. This unit looks at the ways in which pesticide residues enter the water supply and the expense and technology employed by water companies in removing



School students interviewing an organic farmer in the Pesticides and Food unit.



Pesticide Action Network **UK**

Pesticide Action Network **UK** (PAN **UK**) is an independent non-profit organisation working nationally and globally with individuals and organisations who share our concerns. PAN **UK** projects enable us to work effectively towards specific targets to enable us to:

- ❖ Eliminate the hazards of pesticides
- ❖ Reduce dependence on pesticides
- ❖ Promote alternatives to pesticides

PAN **UK**'s projects are a practical and effective reflection of our concerns. We are actively engaged in all aspects of the health and environmental problems caused by pesticides.

Pesticides are toxic chemicals used to kill or control pests (including insects, weeds and diseases) in agriculture, urban areas and for public health purposes. Their widespread introduction into the environment, often without adequate safeguards, can create serious problems.

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residues. It includes interviews with conventional farmers and with representatives from the Severn Trent water company.

- * Cotton. The source of our jeans and T-shirts, conventional cotton requires more acutely toxic pesticides for its production than any other crop in the world. This unit has footage from cotton fields in Benin, discussion of fatal poisonings resulting from the use of cotton pesticides, and interviews with an organic cotton campaigner, a fashion designer Kathryn Hamnett, and a small business selling clothes made solely from organic cotton. It considers the implications of organic cotton trade initiatives for producers in developing countries.
- * Chocolate. Although the pesticide lindane has been banned in the UK residues are still found in conventional chocolate bars. This unit includes an interview with a representative of the Biscuit, Cake, Chocolate and Confectionary Alliance and explores the use of pesticides in cocoa production.
- * Pesticides and the Environment. The herbicide atrazine is one of the most widely used in the world. Recent research has shown that levels of atrazine 30 times lower than that allowed in drinking water in the United States can 'feminise' male frogs. This unit contains a video link with the US researcher who carried out the research and considers the implications of his findings.
- * Pesticides in the Community. This unit explores the use of pesticides in our communities and our possible exposure. It includes an exploration of pesticide use in schools, homes, allotments and will look at ways in which we can reduce our exposure to such chemicals.

Close-up look at pesticide sprayer filmed for the school video.



2. The Pesticide Audit and Guide

We encourage schools and students to consider the ways they are exposed to pesticides in their everyday lives by completing a pesticide audit. The audit is accompanied by guidance to aid completion of the audit. Information will also be provided on ways to reduce exposure to pesticides.

Raising awareness of the adverse affects of practices and behaviour that are an integral part of our lives is an issue of social responsibility and citizenship. There are competing interpretations of the risks involved in pesticide use, there are practices that are downright harmful - an examination of pesticide issues provides an exciting opportunity to find out how our community is organised and what can be done to influence the way it works.

This project is part of our UK and Europe Programme promoting pesticide reduction policies (reduction of use, risk and dependence) and public access to information and participation in decision making on pesticides issues. We monitor European policies and initiatives and support the PAN regional network of NGOs in Europe. We research the impacts of pesticides and the benefits of alternative practices in order to influence research, policy and practice. We work with farmers, local authority and home and garden users, and provide support for people whose health has been adversely affected by pesticides.