

Food & Fairness: Changing supply chains for African health and welfare

What's it all about?

Ghanaian smallholders (pictured below) interviewed in 2001 for PAN UK's research on patterns of pesticide dependency were enthusiastic about the decent income to be made from pineapple for export. They maintained a diverse farming enterprise by growing cassava and maize for domestic consumption and local markets. But they expressed serious concern about their future in farming, due to the many problems they faced as independent smallholders in an export market dominated by big companies and doubts about what European consumers wanted in terms of fruit quality and production methods. They had heard about organic food and its increasing market demand but did not know how to produce pineapple without the use of pesticides and synthetic fertilisers. One man asked "If Europeans don't want pesticides in their fruit, why do European companies send all these pesticide products to African farmers in the first place?"

There is a dilemma between European food safety laws, consumer concerns and the future for African small-scale farmers growing crops for export. Food quality controls include legal limits on the amount of pesticides permitted in fresh produce, as well as private quality standards of supermarkets and their purchasing practices. As pesticide residue limits have become much stricter, they could threaten the livelihoods of millions of farmers and farm workers if they, or the export companies they supply, cannot comply with these standards. In an increasingly globalised food chain, importers and supermarkets can simply turn elsewhere to source their produce, with devastating consequences for the estimated 45 million people, mainly women, in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries who earn their living from the export horticulture sector.

This dilemma is not just a problem for poor farmers in developing countries. One Dutch supermarket recently responded to media campaigns over pesticide residues by cutting off relations with 600 small-scale grape growers in Greece and shifting to a single, large scale supplier. Is there a future for small-scale farmers in Europe and Africa or will the retailers which dominate our food supply exclude them in the quest to reassure consumers' concerns about food safety?



Young men from Fotobi, Ghana, proud to have returned to their village from poorly-paid work in the city to earn a living growing pineapples for export.



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

Pesticide Action Network UK promotes healthy food, agriculture and an environment which will provide food and meet public health needs without dependence on toxic chemicals, and without harm to food producers and agricultural workers.

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.

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.

For further information please contact:
Stephanie Williamson, International Project
Officer (Food & Fairness)
Pesticide Action Network UK
Development House
56-64 Leonard Street
London EC2A 4JX, UK.
tel: +44 (0)20 7065 0916
fax: +44 (0)20 7274 0907
email: stephaniewilliamson@pan-uk.org
<http://www.pan-uk.org>

Objectives of Food & Fairness

PAN UK's new project from 2005-2007 aims to generate support for safer and more sustainable farming systems that enhance the livelihoods of African women and men farmers and supply the quality of food that consumers demand. Our objectives are to:

1. Use food safety concerns in Europe to raise awareness of the negative impacts of pesticide dependency on the health, environment and livelihoods of African farmers and farm workers
2. Create public and consumer awareness of food safety changes that could limit access of small-scale farmers to European markets
3. Encourage supermarkets, food companies and importers to support safe and sustainable pest management solutions for small-holders as part of their corporate social responsibility practices
4. Facilitate dialogue between food and farming sectors, consumers, development NGOs and donors in Europe and government and agricultural sectors in Africa to deliver sustainable crop management options for small-scale farmers

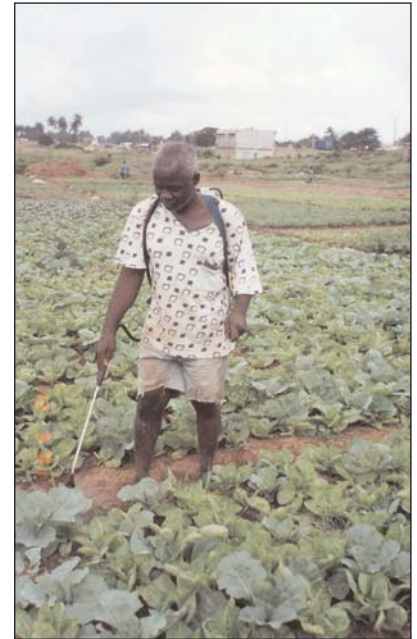
Project partners

PAN Africa will look at export market access for Senegalese smallholders and quality compliance issues and provide a channel for farmer concerns to reach food companies, consumers and donors in Europe. PAN Germany is working with African NGOs via on-line information service for alternatives to pesticides for tropical crops (OISAT); and Dutch environmental NGO Stichting Natuur Milieu promotes Integrated Pest and Crop Management strategies and campaigns for supermarkets and farmers to reduce their use of hazardous pesticides. The PAN Europe network involves dozens of groups working on food and farming issues.

Joint activities to promote dialogue and change

Food & Fairness will engage with a wide range of interest groups in the food chain. We plan an exchange visit by African vegetable farmers to meet their counterparts in Europe, to discuss common problems of pesticide dependency, the search for alternatives, supermarket pressures and the need to develop closer links with consumers. We will compare the attitude and actions of different companies in practical support for farmers to shift to safer pest management and brief African stakeholders on the health and environmental concerns of the hundreds of hazardous pesticides still authorised for use in Europe. Dialogue exchange in Europe and Africa with food chain players will explore best practice and how to encourage this more widely. Special reports and case studies on promoting safe and sustainable production by smallholders in fruit, vegetable and beverage crops will be compiled and disseminated.

PAN UK invites interested organisations, from private and public sectors or civil society, to take part in this exciting and timely project. An advisory group of individuals is planned for Europe and another in Africa, to draw on the expertise and experience of people from the food sector, academia, trade unions, agricultural research and farming. The project also welcomes inputs and feedback from organisations not formally involved in Food & Fairness activities. A project page will be developed on the PAN UK website, with links to activities by project partners.



Farmers producing vegetables for the local market in Benin, like this one near Cotonou, may spray crops every 3 days, right up to harvest. They use highly toxic pesticides, often not authorised for fresh produce. Donors, government agencies and food companies working to ensure compliance with European food safety requirements in export horticulture should avoid generating a dual standard system, where African consumers are left unprotected from serious hazards in local production systems.

PAN UK's International Programme works on issues of obsolete pesticides and their disposal; impacts of pesticide-dependent agriculture on health, the environment and food security; trade and corporate strategies affecting pesticide use; and policy tools for risk reduction and improved regulation of pesticides. We support African partner organisations in information resources and outreach activities on pesticides and alternatives, and actively promote organic cotton production from field to final product.