

- Consumer information laws allowing consumers to find out which retailers sell food contaminated with pesticides (such as the brand 'name and shame' legislation in the UK)
- Food trade to establish quality management systems for safeguarding standards and ensuring goods are uncontaminated
- Support for the farming and sale of organic products

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Austrian NGO's supermarket pesticide reduction campaign

Global 2000, the Austrian member of Friends of the Earth International, have been running a pesticide reduction programme since January 2002. They began with a field survey of illegal pesticide use followed by a media campaign warning about pesticide residues in peppers under the slogan 'pesticide peppers'. In March 2002, they tested peppers grown in glasshouses and found significant concentrations of DDE (the breakdown product of DDT). Global 2000 then launched a three week campaign to inform consumers and put pressure on retailers to respond.

Global 2000 wanted to campaign alongside a supermarket with serious market share, and in June 2002 the Billa chain, which holds 40% of the market, responded by asking for Global 2000's support to address the health problems of residues in food. In the same month, food safety authorities in Vienna offered their cooperation and by November the pesticide reduction programme had begun.

Global 2000's main goal is for zero residues and for supermarkets to push for stricter MRLs than government. In the first phase of the programme supermarkets were required to reduce MRLs to 80% of the official value. As a result, Billa supermarket MRLs are now stricter than the legal MRLs. Compliance is monitored by the supermarket and Global 2000. Global 2000 takes regular samples, analyses the results and shows them to the fruit and vegetable producers and suppliers.

Results of zero residues and residues not exceeding the supermarket MRLs are communicated to suppliers and growers, for information only. Where MRLs are exceeded, producers and suppliers are required to act to prevent a repeat of the situation. Where the MRLs are exceeded for a second time by a specific grower, this supplier is banned for a short period while he/she has a chance to comply. In cases of continued exceedance and acute toxicity

concerns, the food product is removed and the grower banned from the supply chain. Global 2000 demands that farmers and suppliers make public their application records and discusses with farmers how pesticide residues degrade in produce. Roundtable discussions provide advice on how growers could change their agricultural practice to avoid residues and environmental problems. Producers now disclose their applications (amount, time, type), and alternative pest management methods are tried out. Suppliers initiate their own trials, for example, on optimising application techniques.

Building up a database of residue analysis results gives Global 2000 a broad picture of which produce is most problematic. Tighter control can be exerted over these products and farmers assisted in finding alternative production methods. Global 2000 experts can supervise production in the field while problems are being ironed out. 'Being on the fields, talking to farmers and learning about their problems is an important part of our work. We want to establish a close connexion between supermarket and producer, so that producers can rely on increased sales which can compensate for possible yield loss from reduced pesticide use' says Karin Bartonek of Global 2000.

Some time ago phase two of the pesticide reduction programme started requiring residues to be under half the officially sanctioned MRL. Billa supermarket chain has been making good progress and now does more residue analysis than the whole national monitoring programme. Recently, in 2006, REWE Austria joined the work deciding to apply the stricter residue limits across its three supermarket affiliates.

Helmut Buertscher, Global 2000
helmut@global2000.at
www.global2000.at

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Manfred Krautter, Greenpeace Germany,
 D-22745 Hamburg, Germany,
manfred.krautter@greenpeace.de