

PAN UK Director

October marked the end of an era for PAN UK when Barbara Dinham, Director since 2000, retired. Barbara was one of the earliest staff members of PAN UK, joining the organisation back in 1990 to work on international issues. During her 16 years with PAN she has shown tremendous commitment, knowledge and wisdom and, particularly in her latter years, managed to balance the international travel demands of the work with running the organisation in London.

She has been a major player on the stage of international advocacy for sustainable agriculture, and for corporate accountability, never losing sight of the role of the major agrochemical corporations in driving pesticide use. She was instrumental in pushing for the development of the Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent (PIC) and the FAO Code of Conduct on pesticides.

She has been a leading light in many networks – PAN's international network being the obvious one – but also in the UK Food Group and the Bhopal Medical Appeal which has over the years raised many hundreds of thousands of pounds to help set up the Sambhavna Clinic in Bhopal.

Staff, Board and supporters will all miss Barbara's commitment and enthusiasm for the work of PAN and wish her well in her retirement.

But while it is sad to see one Director leave, PAN UK is delighted that Linda Craig has joined as the new Director. For the last seven years Linda has been General Secretary of Quaker Peace and Social Witness, the peace-building and social justice arm of the Society of Friends in Britain, where she had overall responsibility for 20 projects in the UK and seven other countries. Prior to that she was Co-Director of the Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence. Linda's considerable skills in management and organisational development will be a real asset to PAN UK as it moves into the future.



Barbara Dinham

Eight dangerous pesticides banned or restricted in Europe

PAN Europe has successfully lobbied to restrict the use of eight hazardous pesticides (azinphos-methyl, carbendazim, dinocap, fenarimol, flusilazole, methamidophos, procymidone and vinclozolin) being reviewed under Directive 91/414/EEC.

At the beginning of 2006 the European Commission (EC) proposed the inclusion of all eight substances on annex 1 which would have permitted their continued use in the European Union. This was despite informing the registrants (multinationals such as Bayer, DuPont, BASF and Dow) that it was 'considering the possible non-inclusion of the substance'. Member States' experts and scientific advisors had evaluated the substances allowing the EC to specify the main risks associated with each of the eight substances which included:

- methamidophos poses risks to operators and consumers, as well as birds, mammals and aquatic organisms;
- procymidone has hormone mimicking potential, and poses risks to birds, mammals and aquatic organisms; in addition it leads to dietary exposure from certain commodities;
- fenarimol has hormone mimicking potential and poses high risks to breast-fed babies.

Despite these concerns, the EC subsequently decided to propose the approval of the eight substances for a period of seven years (instead of the normal period of ten years), limiting their use to a number of specific crops. An extensive set of mitigation measures were proposed to limit negative impacts, such as imposing safety margins of several metres near water courses, obliging operators to wear protective equipment during application and cleaning of equipment and on re-entering the treated area. However, these would have been impossible to monitor or enforce in the field.

Although Member States representatives did not approve these proposals in the regulatory Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health on two occasions (March and June), the EC nevertheless transmitted the proposals to the Council, where senior officials had to decide the fate of the substances.

In July, government officials agreed to ban two substances (azinphos-methyl, vinclozolin) whilst no qualified majority was attained for the remainder. Despite their hazards, a minority of Member States was concerned about the unpopularity of a ban among their farmers and continued to block any agreement. Under the current system of decision-making (commitology) if the Council fails to reach an agreement in three months, the Commission can adopt a decision.

Facing severe pressure from many Member States concerned with the health and environmental risks of the substances, the EC finally changed the proposals to include two substances for a period of three years (carbendazim and dinocap) and the remaining four for 18 months (fenarimol, flusilazole,

methamidophos and procymidone). This proposal was discussed at the Working Group level in the Council where Member States representatives again failed to achieve a qualified majority. However, as three months had elapsed since the transmission of the decision to the Council, this proposal was adopted. Litigation procedures against the EC by the multinational agrochemical companies followed promptly.

Since the beginning of 2006 and with the support of national members and Brussels-based organisations, PAN Europe established contacts with members of the EC, Council and European Parliament advocating the substances be banned with a derogation period, if necessary, that would allow farmers to shift towards less hazardous substances. PAN

Decisions on the eight

Banned - azinphos-methyl, vinclozolin

Approved for 18 months - carbendazim, dinocap

Approved for three years - methamidophos, fenarimol, flusilazole, procymidone

Europe has also issued several press releases and sent letters to members of the European Commission and Council advocating the ban and the opportunity to remove these hazardous substances from the European market which would have benefits for both farmers and consumers. Although PAN Europe campaigned for a total ban, the final outcome is considerably better than the initial proposal to approve all substances for seven years. With a new Regulation for placing pesticides in the market in the pipeline that will exclude carcinogenic, reprotoxic, mutagenic and endocrine disrupting substances, these substances will likely be banned after their approval expires in 18 months or three years.

What is most striking in this process is how the final decision on whether to approve hazardous substances relies on a complex web of pressures from the agrochemical industry, the political agenda of Member States' politicians and an imperfect decision-making system where the democratically elected members of the European Parliament have limited powers. The public has virtually no means of intervening in this process.

The eight substances are all from the second stage of review of active substances. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has just announced the conclusion of the risk assessment reports for all the substances in this stage and its now up to the EC to draft the proposals for inclusion on Annex 1 or for a ban. Other highly hazardous substances in current use can also be found in the second stage of the review, such as organophosphates with neurotoxic and carcinogenic properties or thiophthalimide fungicides with known carcinogenic properties. (SP)