

The politics of paraquat

The struggle to ban paraquat in Malaysia has been a long and, until now, unfinished story. This new book *The Politics of Paraquat* provides insight into the fight between affected workers, strongly supported by PANAP (Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific) and the women and migrant workers organisation Tenaganita, on one side, and the big Palm Oil producers and the agrochemical company Syngenta (the manufacturers of paraquat) on the other side.

The main value of this highly readable book is that it does not only provide reports of the well known negative effects of paraquat use, but places the problems of paraquat in a wider context. The first part of the book is dedicated to the history of the plantations in Malaysia (rubber, palm oil) and on the daily lives of plantation workers today. Understanding the day to day reality of life in these plantations is a precondition to understanding the problem of worker poisoning by pesticides. The total dependence of the workers on the plantation company, and the absence of a strong and committed union, makes it very hard to fight against the inhuman working conditions. Women and migrant workers typically carry out the most dangerous work.

The second part of the book describes the long struggle to ban paraquat in Malaysia. The campaign started to gather steam in the 1980s, when citizens groups encountered evidence of farmers and plantation workers suffering health problems due to pesticide exposure. In 1985 paraquat was listed in PAN's dirty dozen. The tremendous work (awareness rising, research and capacity building) Tenaganita and PANAP have undertaken in Malaysia in the last twenty years is documented in a very transparent manner. This engagement led to a ban on paraquat in Malaysia in 2002. But due to powerful counter-lobbying from Syngenta, described in detail in the book, the ban was not implemented until now.

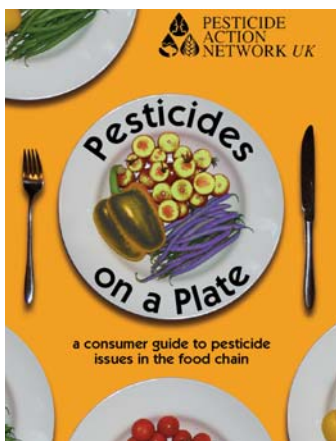
The final chapter shows how Syngenta is using paraquat as a positive example in their corporate social responsibility reporting and why this propaganda often has little to do with reality. For example, Syngenta is in contravention of the FAO Code of Conduct regarding their advertisement of paraquat in Thailand.

Let's hope that a second edition of the book will carry an additional chapter on the final implementation of the paraquat ban in Malaysia and elsewhere. There have been signs in recent months (a ban on paraquat in Europe, Dole discontinuing paraquat use) that paraquat is reaching the end of the road.

The Politics of Paraquat. Josie M. Fernandez and Rash Behari Bhattacharjee, *The Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific and Tenaganita (Malaysia)*, paperback, 269 pp, US\$10 + postage. To order email tenaganita@yahoo.co.uk or firene_bltiz@yahoo.com

Pesticides on a Plate

This consumer guide gives a simple overview for a non-technical audience on pesticides and the hazards they pose, with a focus on pesticide residues in food and how to avoid them. It also discusses how farmers and farm workers can be affected, particularly in developing countries, and the costs society pays for pesticide problems. The guide then looks at the role of supermarkets in our dependency on pesticides and how food supply chains could work to reduce pesticide use. Good news stories give examples of how pesticides can be reduced in agriculture and give plenty of ideas for individual action, from selecting food with the lowest levels of residues, to getting involved in lobbying on pesticide policy. The booklet can be downloaded from the PAN UK website and is suitable for community groups, students, consumer groups and the public, with lists of resources and further reading. Hard copies can be obtained from PAN UK.



The Chemical Trap: Stories from African Fields

This illustrated booklet provides insights into the health, welfare and financial impacts on African smallholders of their dependency on hazardous pesticides, in cash crops and in local food crops. It describes in a non-technical style and format findings from research by NGO partners in Benin, Senegal, Ghana and Ethiopia with farmers growing cotton, vegetables, fruit and staple cereals and legumes. Accompanied with colour photos showing farm families' living conditions and farming practice, *The Chemical Trap* also shows that safer, more profitable livelihoods are possible, by promoting farmer training and market opportunities for organic and Integrated Pest Management produce. The booklet is suitable for development education, use in schools or colleges or for the general public.

The booklet can be downloaded in pdf format via <http://www.pan-uk.org/Projects/Fairness/>

The Chemical Trap



Stories from African fields



New Food and Fairness briefings

PAN UK has published four briefings in the *Food and Fairness* series, addressing pesticide use issues of relevance to food companies, NGOs, African pesticide regulators and donors. The topics cover:

- Which pesticides are banned in Europe?
- Hidden costs of pesticide use in Africa
- The FAO Pesticide Code of Conduct: new responsibilities for food companies
- Pesticide food and drink poisoning in Africa

These can be downloaded in pdf format from the *Food and Fairness* web pages at <http://www.pan-uk.org/Projects/Fairness/>

Which Pesticides are Banned in Europe?
Hidden Costs of Pesticide Use in Africa

The FAO Pesticide Code of Conduct: New Responsibilities for Food Sector Companies

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Food and Fairness Briefing No. 1

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Food and Fairness Briefing No. 4

PAN UK – Making a difference

Pesticide Action Network UK works to eliminate the dangers of toxic pesticides, our exposure to them, and their presence in the environment where we live and work. Nationally and globally we promote safer alternatives, the production of healthy food and sustainable farming.

Pesticide Action Network UK is an independent, non-profit organisation. We work around the world with like-minded groups and individuals concerned with health, environment and development to:

- Eliminate the hazards of pesticides
- Reduce dependence on pesticides and prevent unnecessary expansion of use
- Increase the sustainable and ecological alternatives to chemical pest control

Please send me the Pesticide Action Network UK Annual Review 2005.

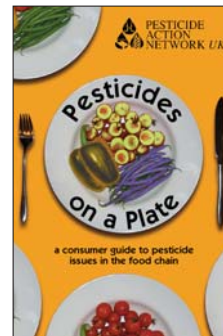
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Recent publications

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The Chemical Trap: Stories from African Fields, an illustrated booklet which provides insights into the impacts of pesticides on the health, welfare and financial impacts on African smallholders. 2007. Download from www.pan-uk.org/Projects/Fairness/



A Cotton Reader. Vol 1 99pp, vol 2 74pp, download from www.wearorganic.org

Living with poison. Problems of endosulfan in West Africa cotton growing systems, 2006, 48pp, £12, or download from www.wearorganic.org

My Sustainable Tee Shirt, a consumer guide to organic, fair trade and other eco-standards and labels for cotton textiles, 2006, 36pp. Download from www.wearorganic.org.

Periodicals

Pesticide News – the most comprehensive quarterly source of information on pesticide problems and alternative developments. Extensive articles, resources, book reviews and news on UK, European and global issues.

Current Research Monitor – an invaluable resource for researchers. This lists up-to-date scientific and specialist research covering the impact of pesticides on health and the environment. Includes abstracts, research lists and conference details.

PEX Newsletter – quarterly information and news sheet for people whose health has been affected by pesticides or who are concerned about the health effects of pesticides.

Greenfly – the supporters newsletter keeps you informed of our activities and gives 'action tips' to help reduce pesticide hazards (twice a year).

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