

A major legal victory on pesticides has just been won in the UK High Court in a case against the UK Government (page 3). Shortly after moving to the countryside with her family as a child, Georgina Downs started suffering from a range of mysterious ailments including flu-like symptoms, blistering inside her mouth and severe muscle wasting. After ruling out many medical conditions Ms Downs explored the possibility that pesticides (she lived next to sprayed fields) could explain the ill health that she, her family and other rural residents were experiencing. Over years she documented the health impact experienced by many rural residents gradually building a compelling case. She identified that the procedure used by the UK government to assess the risks of pesticides did not take into account the chronic long term exposure experienced by people living next to sprayed fields. After continuous dismissal of her evidence by the UK Government she took her case to the High Court and has now won. It remains to be seen how the UK Government will respond.

European consumers' anxiety about pesticide residues in food has led to numerous initiatives to minimise the residues remaining on the harvested crop. But what of flowers? Consumers demand a perfect bloom and rarely consider residues. Floriculture has been known for its high use of pesticides. This, coupled with inadequate work conditions, has led to ill health in workers. A factsheet published in this issue documents the economics of the industry and the pesticides used. It summarises published health studies and looks at initiatives to improve current conditions (page 19).

We also bring examples of change in action. In Kenya, the initiative of the Real IPM company has turned around floriculture (page 6). Its two founders worked to identify insects that prey on the spider mite (the main pest of roses and carnations) and then developed economic methods of producing them in large quantities. They are now turning around the rose and carnation production in Kenya. They provide a great example of the impact a couple of motivated and energetic people can make. The Kenyan Government has also to be commended for developing a rapid system allowing their biological controls to be registered and used.

This year's Rachel Carson Memorial Lecture will be delivered by Chuck Benbrook of The Organic Center in Oregon. With decades of experience working on agricultural policy in Washington DC Chuck is well-placed to comment on contemporary trends in pest management. Over the years he has watched the rise of systemic pesticides, a type of pesticide that is taken up by and moves throughout a plant. He predicts that, just as with organochlorines in the 1960s and 1970s, systemic pesticides may have unpredicted consequences. He argues that the Colony Collapse Disorder, now being witnessed globally within bee populations could be the first such impact. If you miss the lecture you can read his message here (page 12).

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## Pesticide Action Network – Regional Centres

**AFRICA**  
PAN Africa  
BP 15938, Dakar-FANN  
Senegal  
Tel: (221) 33 825 4914  
Fax: (221) 33 825 1443  
panafrica@pan-afrique.org  
www.pan-afrique.org

**ASIA/PACIFIC**  
PAN Asia and the Pacific  
PO Box 1170  
10850 Penang, Malaysia  
Tel: (60-4) 657 0271  
Fax: (60-4) 658 3960  
panap@panap.net  
www.panap.net

**EUROPE**  
PAN Europe is facilitated by PAN UK and PAN Germany  
www.pan-europe.info  
elliott@pan-europe.info  
PAN Germany  
Nernstweg 32  
22765 Hamburg, Germany  
Tel: (49-40) 399 191022  
Fax: (49-40) 390 7520  
info@pan-germany.org  
www.pan-germany.org  
www.pan-international.org  
links to all PAN Regional Centres

**LATIN AMERICA**  
RAPAL (PAN Latin America)  
Coordinadora Regional  
Av. Providencia N°365, depto. N°41  
Providencia, Santiago de Chile  
Tel/Fax: (56-2) 341 6742  
rapal@rapal.cl  
www.rap-al.org  
**NORTH AMERICA**  
PAN North America  
49 Powell St., 5th Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94102, US  
Tel: (1-415) 981 1771  
Fax: (1-415) 981 1991  
panna@panna.org  
www.panna.org

Who's who at  
Pesticide Action Network UK

Linda Craig  
**Director**

Nick Mole  
**Policy Officer**

Dr Roslyn McKendry  
**Editor, Pesticides News**

Elliott Cannell  
**PAN Europe Coordinator**

Damien Sanfilippo  
**International Project Officer (Cotton)**

Eloise Touni  
**International Project Officer (Disposal)**

Dr Stephanie Williamson  
**International Project Officer (Food and Farming)**

Ruth Beckmann  
**Project Information Officer**

Oscar Martinez  
**Finance Manager**

Martin Cooke  
**Information/IT/Outreach Manager**

Nigel Turner  
**Senior Administration Officer**

Geremew Tereda  
**Accounts**

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Initials at the end of articles refer to staff contributions to *Pesticides News*.

#### Abbreviations and acronyms used

ACP Advisory Committee on Pesticides  
CRA Comparative Risk Assessment  
EA Environment Agency (UK)  
EC European Commission  
EPA Environmental Protection Agency (US)  
EU European Union  
FAO Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations  
FFS Farmer Field School  
FSA Food Standards Agency  
HSE Health and Safety Executive  
ILO International Labour Organisation  
IPM Integrated pest management  
LD<sub>50</sub> lethal dose for 50% of population  
µg/kg parts per billion  
MRSLs Maximum Residue Limits  
mg/l parts per million  
NGO Non government organisation  
OECD Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development  
OP Organophosphate (pesticide)  
PAN Pesticide Action Network  
PIC Prior Informed Consent  
PN *Pesticides News*  
UNEP United Nations Environment Programme

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