

Improving capacities to eliminate and prevent recurrence of obsolete pesticides as a model for tackling unused hazardous chemicals in the former Soviet Union

Summary of Findings, Recommendations and Lessons Learnt

1st Meeting of the Programme Steering Committee

Chisinau, Moldova
September 28 – 29, 2012

Introduction:

The 1st annual steering committee meeting of the project “Improving capacities to eliminate and prevent recurrence of obsolete pesticides as a model for tackling unused hazardous chemicals in the former Soviet Union” was held in Chisinau on September 28 – 29 2012. The meeting was chaired by the programme managers from the EC / EuropeAid. UNDP local office, UNEP Chemicals, World Bank and UNIDO attended the meeting part-time. The main points of discussion were:

- a. The role of FAO as the main project implementation agency was explained and is understood by all countries;
- b. The need for signature of legal agreements to allow implementation of project activities linked to Outcome 1 (obsolete pesticide management) has been explained and the need for lobbying by the country representatives for prompt action was clarified to all countries;
- c. The concept of the Operational Manual to be developed by each country following project signature was introduced and examples presented from the project teams of Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova (who have signed agreements with FAO). The process for OM development was presented and the use of the OM to define the work plan at country level and to identify resource inputs from the project, government contribution and alternative sources of finance was also explained;
- d. The linkages with the UNEP-DDT project operational in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan was presented and the need for countries concerned to ensure the potential for collaboration with this and other projects was explained. Inclusion of linkages to this and other projects in the Operational Manuals was also explained;
- e. The need for inclusion and prioritisation of pesticides under the wider development sectors of agriculture and environment was explained by representatives of the EC. If the issue is a priority at national level it will need to feature in the country development plans / strategies currently under negotiation with development partners.

The role of the country teams in pushing the pesticides issue onto the wider agenda will be important;

- f. The role of Green Cross Switzerland (GC) as a project partner was explained to all countries. GC will primarily be responsible for providing technical support to countries related to the development and implementation of monitoring and evaluation plans linked to work plans for implementation. A letter of agreement (LOA) is under development with GC which is scheduled to become operational in January 2013. GC may also be called upon to organise and support future SC meetings based on a comparison of costs for the first meeting organised through FAO. No objections were raised to the proposed role and FAO considers the SC meeting to have endorsed the proposed course of action;
- g. The role of IHPA as a project partner was presented to all countries. IHPA will take on the implementation of Output 3.2. (Regional study on disposal options). The study will allow for a complete review of the legislative framework for the management of pesticide wastes including the assessment of existing national legislation compared to EU equivalents and the requirements as set out in the Basel and Stockholm Conventions. The study will also look to assess existing capacity for environmentally sound disposal of wastes and try to identify opportunities for future developments for technological solutions for pesticide disposal. A letter of agreement (LOA) is under development with IHPA which is scheduled to become operational in January 2013. No objections were raised to the proposed role and FAO considers the SC meeting to have endorsed the proposed course of action;
- h. The role of Milieukontakt International (MKI) as a project partner was presented to all countries. MKI will focus on the provision of technical support to countries linked to implementation of Outcome 1 and Output 2.4. This includes support for development of Operational Manuals once signed agreements with FAO are confirmed followed by support to work planning and implementation. This input is separate from the M&E support offered through GC to ensure clear roles of partners and avoidance of any duplication of efforts. MKI will provide the support through a group of technical experts based in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova. The experts will initially focus on providing support to the three countries with signed agreements and then expand their support to other countries in the respective sub-regions (Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia) as project agreements are signed with FAO. MKI through the three experts will be the first point of contact for clarification and advice on technical issues for the project. No objections were raised to the proposed role and FAO considers the SC meeting to have endorsed the proposed course of action;
- i. The requirements of the EC visibility guidelines were explained to countries and project partners by the representative of EuropeAid. The importance of the development of a country level awareness and communications plan under Output 2.4 of the project linked to the establishment of a project level visibility and communications plan under Output 3.1 was emphasised. The need to follow the requirements of the EU Visibility Guidelines was made clear to all participants. It is planned to develop a series of common templates for use by countries for official communications and publications released in the name of the project. The need to ensure the active involvement of the EU Delegations at country level was also explained.

- j. An offer to host the next SC meeting was made by Kyrgyzstan. The offer was gratefully accepted and adopted by the meeting. The meeting will be a joint SC meeting with the UNEP DDT Alternatives project.

Implementation Modalities

The meeting provided an opportunity for FAO to clarify a series of administrative modalities linked to allocation of resources to countries and the management of funds.

- a. Allocation of resources: it was clarified that the allocation of project funds to countries would be on a first-come-first-serve basis. Countries were therefore encouraged to sign the legal agreements with FAO as a matter of urgency in order to be sure of securing the necessary budget to support activities at country level. It was also stressed that any resources not allocated by mid-term (December 2013) would be reallocated to support additional activities in the countries which have signed legal agreements.
- b. Operational Manual: It was stressed that the final activities to be completed at country level will be formulated into a country-specific Operational Manual similar to those presented at the SC meeting by Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova. The Operational Manuals will define the detailed activities to be implemented at country level and will form the basis of reporting on progress. Funding would be allocated from Outcome budgets based on the final scope of activities to be completed in each country until the budget allocated for each Outcome is fully committed. This approach to resource allocation is necessary to ensure the indicators in the original project description are met.
- c. Fund management: It was explained that FAO will manage all procurement and financial management at country level. Local expenses related to travel and operating costs will be managed through an allocation of funds through existing UN systems.
- d. Payment of national project coordinators: It was also stressed that the role of the country coordinators will not be funded through the project other than through covering any incremental costs associated with implementation such as official travel, attendance at meetings etc. This is standard practice for all FAO managed projects of this type. The staff time of personnel from national government agencies and the allocation of resources such as vehicles to support implementation will be considered as an in-kind contribution by each government. The value of such in-kind contributions will be highlighted in the Operational Manuals developed in each country. This additional contribution will be an important factor when considering co-finance to any new projects developed in the region.

Project Signature Status

The meeting allowed for countries to provide an update of the status of signature of the project agreement. In summary the status of country level activities for the countries present at the SC meeting was confirmed as:

- Armenia: the project agreement and description of the project are under internal review by relevant Ministries. No significant issues are foreseen but the process will require additional time to allow for a complete review by all involved Ministries;
- Azerbaijan: the project agreement and description of the project are under internal review by relevant Ministries. No significant issues are foreseen but the process will require additional time to allow for a complete review by all involved Ministries;
- Belarus: based on changes made to the FAO standard agreement format Belarus is in the final stages of obtaining the internal clearances needed to allow signature of the agreement. No issues are foreseen once the formal go-ahead has been given from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- Georgia: following signature of the legal agreement with FAO on April 11 2012 Georgia has been engaged with the planning process to ensure smooth project implementation. Activities have included the appointment of a national steering committee, appointment of national project coordinators from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment Protection Authorities and development of the draft Operational Manual;
- Kazakhstan: all international agreements must complete three levels of intrastate consultations. Following consent the document is forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Kazakhstan is considering cooperation with FAO on registration and treatment of pesticides;
- Kyrgyzstan: following signature of the legal agreement with FAO on April 11 2012 Kyrgyzstan has been engaged with the planning process to ensure smooth project implementation. Activities have included the appointment of a national steering committee, appointment of national project coordinator from Ministry of Agriculture and development of the draft Operational Manual;
- Moldova: following signature of the legal agreement with FAO on April 11 2012 Moldova has been engaged with the planning process to ensure smooth project implementation. Activities have included the appointment of a national steering committee, appointment of national project coordinator from Ministry of Agriculture and development of the draft Operational Manual in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Defence;
- Tajikistan: the project in Tajikistan has been under review by a number of Ministries. Extensive comments have been received and responses provided by FAO. Ministry of Agriculture supports Tajikistan joining the project linked to the work currently being undertaken by the UNEP DDT project;

- Ukraine: currently undertaking a large programme on management of obsolete pesticides funded from government budget. Links to the EC-FAO project will need to be based on added value from the project. Based on the reports at the SC meeting the representative undertook to advise Ukraine that they should join the project;
- Uzbekistan: the project is currently under review by the Cabinet of Ministers. The representative stated she would provide a positive report on the SC meeting and promote the signing of the agreement with FAO to allow work to commence.

Risks

The meeting allowed an opportunity for the country teams to work as two groups to define the risks and challenges to implementation as seen from their perspective. A 45 minute brain storming session was held where each group was asked to come up with 5 key risks linked to political, financial and technical factors. Presentations were made by the delegations from Moldova and Kyrgyzstan. The key areas highlighted by the groups are presented below:

Political:

- issues linked to changes in government structures and movement of personnel within government was highlighted;
- a lack of awareness amongst senior decision makers on the issues and a lack of prioritisation of national resources in some countries;
- problem of coordination between Federal / National level administrations with Regional / Oblast level administrations was also cited as an area which can have great influence on project implementation;
- time needed to obtain project approvals due to the process of review and consultation prior to approval of any new projects at national level.

Financial:

- pesticide and waste issues do not feature in national development plans and so access to existing donor funding is limited;
- government budget allocated to environment is stretched over a number of focal areas with a large emphasis on climate change;
- co-finance ratios for access to GEF resources under the POP operational programme are too high for many of the poorer nations;
- price increases for international services and external inputs;
- lack of a mechanism for payment of national staff who are working on the project in addition to their normal duties.

Technical:

- a lack of laboratory capacity in some countries has made the definition of the scope of the problem very difficult. In some countries the laboratories exist in the private sector making access expensive;
- a lack of human resources and high staff turn-over result in a continuous need for development of new capacity within government departments.

The role of government as project implementer also needs review as in some countries where capacity exists national regulations prohibit active participation;

- Transport of waste across the territory of the Russian Federation from Central Asia has been highlighted as an issue. A number of cases were raised where movement of wastes under the Basel Convention have not been approved. This severely restricts the options for waste treatment from this region;
- a lack of enforcement of existing regulations or a lack of a regulatory framework prevents effective management of waste.

Recommendations

A second brainstorming session was completed by the two groups to identify a set of recommendations which address the issues and barriers to implementation identified above. Each group worked for 45 minutes to develop a set of recommendations. A number of common recommendations were identified and presented below. In addition, the responses to the recommendations are provided based on comments made by FAO and the other project partners at the SC Meeting:

- *The need for a technical working group from the country implementation teams to allow for exchange of ideas and experiences.* Whilst this idea would provide a forum for capacity development the cost of organising such a group and facilitating face-to-face meetings would be higher than the project can sustain. It was stressed that the teams from the countries should find a mechanism to exchange ideas and experience either through virtual meetings or use of existing meetings where costs for travel etc are already covered. FAO will continue under the project to support the participation of personnel from country teams at Programme Technical Committee meetings as a mechanism for information exchange. Representatives from country project teams at the PTC meetings will take on responsibility for circulating discussions points to the countries not present at the meeting;
- *Countries to encourage participation of local authorities, NGOs and scientific institutions during development of Operational Manuals and work plans.* The OM template and instructions encourage a multi-stakeholder approach to project development and FAO will continue to support this approach;
- *All documents and reports to be provided in Russian to allow adequate review by national teams in a timely manner.* FAO has made efforts to meet this requirement in the past and the point is noted;
- *FAO and EU to provide templates for the completion of reviews and preparation of documents as far as possible to allow for comparison of outputs from countries and standardisation of data.* This process has started with the development of the OM template. Additional templates will be provided as implementation of project Outcomes at country level commences;
- *Lines of communication to project partners and points of contact to be clearly defined. The roles of the project partners need clear definition.* The role of the

three project technical advisors under the management of Milieukontakt has been explained during the meeting. The advisors will provide the first point of contact for countries with respect to the provision of technical advice at country level. The advisors will assist country teams to develop their OMs and to develop the work plans for implementation. Additional technical advice will be provided by FAO. Monitoring and Evaluation of country projects will be provided by Green Cross Switzerland;

- *Support needed for the development and enhancement of laboratory capacity at national level.* The current project will not provide resources to support this activity. FAO's support to this activity is limited to bi-lateral support such as the project GCP/ARM/003/GRE which is providing specific support to Armenia for the development of laboratory capacity for pesticide residues in food and pesticide formulation assessment. FAO encourages the cooperation of countries to provide the necessary support linked to access of laboratory capacity. Project funds may be used to support the cost of analysis by a laboratory in a neighbouring country based on a cost recovery basis;
- *Country representatives to be more involved in the project formulation phase and communications to government departments to be made via the formal channels of the International Relations Department.* FAO and the EC recognise the lack of country consultation during the initial stages of project design of the current project. As explained this is a direct result of the short time line for project preparation if funds were to be secured before the end of 2011. It was mentioned that the project is a direct response to requests from several countries, among them Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine, presented at a mini-hearing at the EU Parliament in June 2010. FAO takes note of the need to make contact to ministries through the official channels as explained at the meeting;
- *More awareness needed for decision makers and general public to ensure that the issue is prioritised.* The inception phase has allowed for a review of existing communications and awareness efforts under previous projects. The needs of the new project will build on existing communications and awareness efforts. The current project allows for the development of country-level awareness programmes under Output 2.4 to be implemented under the guidance of Milieukontakt.