

Tbilisi, Georgia, 7-11 July 2014

Press release



Protecting farmers and vulnerable groups from pesticide poisoning and assisting policy makers to improve pesticide safety

**EU and FAO partnership project
“Improved pesticides and chemicals management in the former Soviet Union”**

From 7 to 11 of July the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and European Union (EU) partnership project on “Improved pesticides and chemicals management in the former Soviet Union” will hold two meetings on pesticide risk reduction, protecting farmers and vulnerable groups from pesticide poisoning and assisting policy makers to improve pesticide safety. Both meetings are being held in Tbilisi, Georgia.

The meetings will bring together representatives of civil society organisations, policy makers and national experts from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine to work together in developing legal policy recommendations for participating countries and to initiate field research into the causes of pesticide poisoning in their countries. The findings of the research will contribute to policy recommendations and to awareness activities in each country aimed at promoting safer practices.

The first meeting is aimed at strengthening the capacity of civil society Non Government Organisations (NGOs) and government specialists to contribute to reducing the risk to public health and to the environment from pesticide use. One of the main focuses will be the issue of how to improve awareness of the risks of pesticide exposure amongst vulnerable groups, including women, children and seasonal workers in agriculture.. Working with the Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention and the Pesticide Action Network UK, the project is delivering training and technical support to enable participants across the region to identify particularly hazardous practices and to promote higher safety standards and so reduce risk.

In addition to these activities, special attention will also be paid to the need to strengthen the collection of information in the field on the use of pesticides and pesticide poisoning incidents. This information will be used to create awareness among decision-making institutes at the national level such as national pesticide registrars.

The second event is a regional conference and workshop aimed at developing a road map for sustainable agriculture across the region. Based on a series of national reviews in the areas of pesticide legislation, the management of pesticides throughout their life cycle and the potential to use alternatives, to the most highly

hazardous pesticides, the meeting will aim to develop a series of national and regional initiatives to promote a more sustainable approach to food production and increased uptake of practices such as integrated pest management (IPM) in the region.

The project covers twelve countries in the European Neighborhood, Central Asia and the Russian Federation regions, and has a total budget in excess of EUR 7 million, EUR 6 million of which is provided by the European Commission's Europe Aid. The project consists of technical implementation by FAO in partnership with a range of development partners including international NGOs (Blacksmith Institute, Green Cross Belarus and Switzerland, Milieukontakt International, Pesticide Action Network UK, the International HCH and Pesticide Association and the Secretariat of Rotterdam Convention).

The European Union and Food and Agriculture Organization aim to assist these countries to foster an environment of information sharing and capacity development to promote a sustainable solution of the problems facing these countries from the mis-management of pesticides used during food production. These two events, in particular, aim to encourage countries to move towards a more sustainable method of food production which protects farmers, vulnerable groups and consumers from the harmful effects of pesticide exposure.