



Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade

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PRESS RELEASE

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Pesticides and industrial chemicals recommended for trade “watch list”

(Rome, 1 April 2011) – United Nations chemical experts have recommended that two pesticides – endosulfan and azinphos methyl – and one severely hazardous pesticide formulation – Gramoxone Super – be included in the Rotterdam Convention’s Prior Informed Consent procedure. Three industrial chemicals – perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), its salts and precursors; pentaBDE commercial mixtures; and octaBDE commercial mixtures – were also recommended for inclusion.

The Convention’s Chemical Review Committee based its recommendation on a review of national regulatory actions taken by Benin, Canada, European Union, Japan, New Zealand, and Norway to ban or restrict the use of chemicals that pose an unacceptable risk to human health and the environment.

“For the first time since the Convention entered into force in 2004, the Committee has recommended adding a severely hazardous pesticide formulation to the Watch List, advancing our Parties’ efforts to ensure that countries’ rights to know and trade chemicals safely are respected,” said FAO’s Peter Kenmore, Co-Executive Secretary of the Rotterdam Convention.

Gramoxone Super is an herbicide containing paraquat dichloride, which is used to control weeds in cotton, rice and maize. Burkina Faso had proposed to include Gramoxone Super as a severely hazardous pesticide formulation (SHPF) into Annex

III of the Convention due to the problems experienced caused by this pesticide formulation under conditions of use in its territory.

PentaBDE and octaBDE commercial mixtures are brominated flame retardants. Due to their toxicity and persistence, their industrial production is set to be eliminated under the Stockholm Convention on persistent organic pollutants (POPs).

“The recommendation to include these three industrial chemicals marks an acceleration in the rate of submission of industrial chemicals to the CRC for review of these substances known to harm human health and the environment. This is, as a result, in part, through the cooperative exchange of information from our sister scientific review committee under the Stockholm Convention,” said Donald Cooper, Co-Executive Secretary of the Rotterdam Convention.

The recommendations will be forwarded to the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention in June 2011.

Greening the FAO

The Chemical Review Committee was the first meeting in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to be held completely paperless. A paperless meeting has the benefit of considerably reducing the carbon footprint of the meeting.

Additional

Jointly supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Rotterdam Convention prevents unwanted trade in the chemicals included in its legally binding prior informed consent (PIC) procedure.

The Rotterdam Convention does not introduce bans but fosters information exchange mechanisms to help improve decision making about the trade of hazardous chemicals. It enables member Governments to alert each other to potential dangers by exchanging information on chemicals and to take informed decisions with regard to whether they want to import such chemicals in the future.

The Convention makes the international trade in hazardous chemicals more transparent and less vulnerable to abuse through its export notification provisions and by encouraging harmonized labeling of chemicals. Exporting member Governments are responsible for ensuring that no exports leave their territory when an importing country has made the decision not to accept a PIC chemical.

In this way, the Rotterdam Convention helps member Governments to improve their national capacity for chemicals management, and to protect human health and the environment. It also encourages all stakeholders to identify and promote safer alternatives.

For more information, please see www.pic.int.

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Footnote:

The chemicals on the Rotterdam Convention's PIC list includes the following 29 hazardous pesticides: 2,4,5-T, aldrin, binapacryl, captafol, chlordane, chlordimeform, chlorobenzilate, DDT, DNOC and its salts, ethylene dichloride, ethylene oxide 1,2-dibromoethane (EDB), dieldrin, dinoseb, fluoroacetamide, HCH, heptachlor, hexachlorobenzene, lindane, mercury compounds, monocrotophos, parathion, pentachlorophenol, toxaphene and tributyl tin, plus certain formulations of methamidophos, methyl-parathion, and phosphamidon, as well as dustable-powder formulations containing a combination of benomyl at or above 7 per cent, carbofuran at or above 10 per cent and thiram at or above 15 per cent that are listed as severely hazardous pesticide formulations.

The Convention also covers eleven industrial chemicals: five forms of asbestos (actinolite, anthophyllite, amosite, crocidolite and tremolite), polybrominated biphenyls (PBB), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB), polychlorinated terphenyls (PCT) tetraethyl lead, tetramethyl lead and tris (2,3 dibromopropyl) phosphate.