

Highly Hazardous Pesticides: The Current Situation in Panama

Raúl Carranza and Ana María Jiménez, Pesticide Action Network-Panama (RAP-AL Panamá in Spanish) 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document looks into *Highly Hazardous Pesticides* (HHP) in Panama. HHP is a new regulatory category emerging within the context of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, known by its acronym SAICM, and the International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management, both of which are voluntary frameworks.

Governments, different specialized UN agencies, industry, and civil society organizations participate in this field. This national analysis was conducted using the criteria defining Highly Hazardous Pesticides proposed by experts from the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), as well as those proposed by the Pesticide Action Network International (PAN-International).

This Executive Summary addresses pesticides that include one or more of these intrinsic hazardous properties: high acute toxicity capable of causing short-term health hazards, or chronic toxicity with long-term effects that may favor the development of cancer, genetic mutations, reproductive damage, hormonal disruption in humans, or harmful environmental effects on aquatic bodies; it may also cause pollinator mortality, or appear on the list of any of the three international environmental conventions (Stockholm, Rotterdam, and the Montreal Protocol).

This report compares PAN-International's list of Highly Hazardous Pesticides with the active ingredients authorized and registered by the competent government authorities of Panama, i.e., the Department of Health and the Department of Agricultural Development.

This summary first highlights the fact that -according to the registration of phytosanitary inputs carried out by the Department of Agricultural Development, updated to 2020- 75 active ingredients in Highly Hazardous Pesticides are authorized. These active ingredients are authorized in more than 2,064 commercial presentations, such as insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, and fumigants, mainly for agricultural use, although they are also allowed for use in livestock, forestry, industry, households, and some even for use in public health campaigns.

An evaluation was made of different types of pesticides used in Panama in lower percentages: herbicides (41.8%), fungicides (28.9%), insecticides (26.6%), nematocides (1.1%), varied by groupings (molluscicides, rodenticides, bactericides), viricides (1.1%), and acaricides (0.2%). Authorization for commercialization is granted to both national companies and multinational corporations in a globalized market.

It should also be noted that the 64 Highly Hazardous Pesticides with sanitary registration currently valid in Panama are actually banned or unauthorized in other countries, in any of their uses. This document also addresses the processes that trading companies must

comply with in order to register agricultural pesticides and inputs, as decreed by the Department of Agricultural Development.

This document identifies the companies with a larger number of Highly Hazardous Pesticide registrations in Panama. Having estimated the number of registrations per company distributing the four more widely used herbicides in Panama, such as 2,4-D, Glyphosate, Paraquat, and Atrazine, it was found that the companies with a larger number of registrations are: Shandong Weifang Rainbow Chemical Co. Ltd., Rainbow Agrosiences Panama S.A., Lier Chemical Co. Ltd, Foragro S.A., AGROSER (the acronym for Agrochemicals, Seeds, and Irrigation Equipment in Spanish). It should be noted that most registrations have been made by companies from China, Panama, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Guatemala.

Among the identified effects of Highly Hazardous Pesticides authorized in Panama, it is worth noting those classified as highly toxic to bees (35), fatal if inhaled, according to the Globally Harmonized System (H330 GHS) (21), Endocrine Disruptors (17), and Probably Carcinogenic to Humans, according to the EPA (14). It is alarming to realize the extraordinary number of highly hazardous pesticides authorized in Panama while they are banned in other countries, the harm recorded in some of the studies presented in this report, the lack of control over aerial spraying of pesticides, the lack of appropriate and reliable environmental monitoring, above all regarding water and soil, as well as their impact on biodiversity, particularly on pollinators.

In Panama, there is much to be done in order to improve the management of chemicals that are harmful to human health and the environment. Although there are numerous acts, decrees, and conventions approved as initiatives to ban and restrict a series of Highly Hazardous Pesticides and other chemicals for agricultural, industrial, and household use, this report demonstrates that many of them can still be found on the market.

Fortunately, a large number of organized producers throughout Panama are choosing new environmentally friendly agricultural production models, such as ecological, agroecological, organic, biological, natural, and biodynamic alternatives, that are raising awareness so that people may choose to consume safe products that do not harm human health or the environment.

The recommendations emphasize that the pesticide management policy in Panama, established by the competent authorities in the different Departments involved, should promote that the Panamanian people respect, protect, and ensure health rights, as well as enjoy a healthy environment and healthy food, as stipulated in the Panamanian Constitution.

It is imperative to develop a National Plan for Reducing and Phasing-Out Highly Hazardous Pesticides, supportive of agroecological alternatives, that bans both HHPs prohibited in the exporting country and aerial spraying, among other measures.