

## **Pesticide Action Network Submission to Governments on the UN Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20 June 2012**

Pesticide Action Network is a global network of over 600 grassroots communities. PAN was formed in response to the increasing use of highly hazardous pesticides and their negative impact on human health and the environment. Especially affected are rural communities including farmers, peasants, agricultural workers, indigenous people, fisherfolk, women, and children.

Twenty years after the 1992 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil the same environmental problems persist and some have worsened. This is in spite of important achievements, for instance in the area of hazardous substances the creation of the chemical conventions, Rotterdam, Stockholm, and Basel<sup>1</sup> and other international policy instruments such as the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). Also, landmark global findings as stated in the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) have thrown light on the contributions and enormous potential of agricultural knowledge, science and technology on sustainable development and their role in poverty alleviation, improvement of rural livelihoods and human health. This global report is lent further weight by the findings of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food who told the UN that in order to combat hunger and malnutrition, states should implement policies to adopt agroecological practices, as agroecology raises productivity, reduces rural poverty, improves nutrition and contributes to adapting to climate change.<sup>2</sup> Now also the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) acknowledges that the present paradigm of intensive crop production cannot meet the world's need for food and that the only way forward is an ecosystem-based approach to agriculture in which pesticides are used as a last resort.<sup>3</sup> This goes hand-in-hand with FAO's goal for a global phase-out through a progressive ban of highly hazardous pesticides.<sup>4</sup>

We are pleased that the Rio+20 zero draft on *The Future We Want* has articulated a vision on sustainable development and poverty eradication based on the green economy taking into account economic, social, and environmental concerns. The Zero Draft has highlighted the role of sustainable agriculture in the achievement of this goal. We welcome the paragraphs on gender equality, and we acknowledge the strong support from many of the Member States for this issue. However, the Zero Draft is short of concrete proposals to address the shortcomings of the last 20 years, concrete targets, timelines, and funding mechanisms or so to speak "legs" to move this vision forward.

We are aware of the enormous task undertaken by governments in developing a vision for the future of humankind and the planet. However, it is equally important to develop a roadmap that can help governments and civil society to implement their vision.

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<sup>1</sup> Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade; Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants; Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.

<sup>2</sup> Report to UN Human Rights Council, March 2011, by UN Special Rapporteur on Right to Food, Oliver De Schutter: *Agro-ecology and the Right to Food*.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.fao.org/ag/save-and-grow/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/core-themes/theme/pests/pm/code/hhp/en/>

PAN International is deeply concerned about the current and future direction of mainstream agriculture, which requires inputs of highly toxic chemicals that have created havoc on human health and the environment, has introduced other risky technologies such as genetically engineered seeds, has undermined the economic well-being and food security of many farmers, and has compromised the well being of future generations.

PAN endorses the submission to Rio+20 by the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN). IPEN has provided a comprehensive analysis of what is expected from the Rio+20 meeting in order to achieve a “toxics-free future.”

In addition, PAN would like to outline some elements to be taken into account when developing a roadmap for sustainable agriculture within the overall plan on sustainable development within a green economy.

PAN believes that securing sustainable agriculture that supports farmers and is free of toxic chemicals is a key component to ensure sustainable development. Under this concept, PAN would like to recommend the global governance regime to:

1. Adopt the Precautionary Principle as a policy in all matters related to sustainable development. The Precautionary Principle should therefore be a central tenet in sustainable agriculture plans.
2. Promote small farm biodiversity-based ecological agriculture as the fundamental component of sustainable agricultural policies and agricultural research.
3. Fund and promote an agricultural research framework which is farmer-centred, gender responsive, promotes biodiversity-based ecological agriculture including the protection of traditional local crop varieties, incorporates traditional knowledge, encourages farmer-scientist partnerships, and supports farmers’ agricultural innovations.
4. Assure gender responsive and gender-parity-based sustainable development institutions, legislation and policies that advance women’s participation and leadership at all levels.
5. Adopt IAASTAD’s findings and recommendations as the basis for sustainable agriculture policies.
6. Enact policies to support and encourage farmers to transition out of conventional chemical agriculture towards biodiversity-based ecological agriculture, thereby reducing their economic burden and exposure to hazardous chemicals.
7. Develop a systematic plan to phase-out highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs) concurrent with a policy plan to promote sustainable ecological agriculture, without the use of hazardous chemicals and technologies.
8. Eliminate WHO Class 1 and 2 pesticides as the beginning of a plan to eliminate all HHPs.
9. Develop pesticide regulations, during the phase out of HHPs, that go beyond the FAO Code of Conduct, which must be used as a minimum standard on pesticide regulations, incorporating the precautionary principle and using comparative assessment or the

substitution process i.e. replacing hazardous pesticides with less hazardous means of controlling the specific pest including non-chemical options.

10. Enact restrictions on pesticide use, particularly of HHPs, during the phase out of pesticides.

11. Not allow intellectual property rights on crops or on other living material. IPRs on seeds is a gross violation of farmers' fundamental and inherent right to save, use, breed and exchange seeds.

12. Not include or promote genetic engineering in agriculture and natural resource management because it will erode biodiversity, expose people and the environment to undue risk of harm, and undermine farmers' and consumers' rights to safe food and a safe environment.

13. Promote climate change solutions in agriculture that aim at building community resilience to climate change impacts through ecological and sustainable agricultural practices, the conservation of traditional local climate-tolerant crop varieties, the protection of biodiversity and natural resources, and ensuring full access to natural resources and necessary support for vulnerable communities. By no means must genetically engineered seeds, agrofuels, or other such corporate-driven measures be considered to any extent acceptable.

14. Hold agrochemical corporations accountable for their human rights violations, which include harm to human health, the environment, and farmers' livelihoods, harassment of farmers and scientists, violence against activists, and collusion with governments, and enact policies to this effect. World governing bodies must create international binding mechanisms to hold agrochemical corporations accountable for their human rights violations.

We urge governments to consider the points outlined above when developing a roadmap for the implementation of a global vision on sustainable development.

*Pesticide Action Network (PAN) is a global network working to eliminate the human and environmental harm caused by pesticides and to promote biodiversity-based ecological agriculture.*