



CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS UNITE TO ADDRESS THE HAZARDOUS PESTICIDES CRISIS IN UGANDA

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A coalition of prominent civil society organizations convened in Kampala this January to sound the alarm on the growing threat of Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) in Uganda. The press conference revealed alarming statistics about pesticide proliferation and called for immediate government action to protect public health and the environment.

Rising Concerns About Pesticide Proliferation

The Food Safety Coalition of Uganda (FoSCU), alongside eight other prominent civil society organizations, presented compelling evidence of the escalating use of agrochemicals throughout the country. According to research findings shared at the event by a FoSCU representative, Uganda has experienced a troubling doubling of agrochemical usage over twelve years, rising from 2,990.23 metric tons in 2010 to 6,009.78 metric tons by 2022.

"What we're witnessing is not simply an increase in agricultural inputs, but potentially a public health crisis in the making," stated a FoSCU representative during the press conference. *"Our farmers and consumers are being inadvertently exposed to substances that have been deemed too dangerous for use in other parts of the world."*

Disturbing Regulatory Disparities

The investigation into Uganda's pesticide regulatory landscape by FoSCU revealed concerning statistics about the nature of chemicals permitted for agricultural use. Of the 115 active ingredients spanning 669 brands officially registered as pesticides in Uganda, nearly half (47.8%) of these ingredients and more than two-thirds (68.6%) of the registered brands meet the criteria for classification as Highly Hazardous Pesticides according to standards established by the Pesticide Action Network (PAN).

Perhaps most alarming was the revelation that 65.5% of these flagged HHP active ingredients have been deemed unsafe and denied approval for use within European Union countries. This regulatory disparity highlights the urgent need for harmonization of safety standards across global markets to prevent the dumping of dangerous chemicals in developing nations.



Health and Environmental Implications

The coalition emphasized the severe health and environmental consequences associated with continued HHP use. These chemicals have been scientifically linked to carcinogenic effects, mutagenic properties, and fetal development issues when inhaled. Additionally, they function as endocrine disruptors, interfering with hormonal systems in both humans and wildlife.

“The environmental impact extends far beyond human health,” explained a representative from the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA). “These pesticides are highly toxic to aquatic ecosystems, devastating to reproductive systems, and particularly harmful to bees and other pollinators essential for our food security and biodiversity.”

Knowledge and Enforcement Gaps

The investigation highlighted significant knowledge gaps among agricultural workers regarding proper pesticide handling and application. Key concerns included limited understanding of pesticide-related safety protocols, poor adherence to recommended mixing rates, and inadequate pre-harvest and post-harvest practices that compromise food safety.

Representatives from the Food Rights Alliance (FRA) and SEATINI underscored how these knowledge gaps are exacerbated by poor enforcement of existing regulatory and institutional frameworks. “Without proper implementation and monitoring of our current regulations, even the strongest policies remain ineffective,” noted a spokesperson from the Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute.

Call for Government Action

The press conference culminated in a unified call for decisive government intervention. The coalition issued a formal statement urging Ugandan authorities to implement a comprehensive ban on Highly Hazardous Pesticides and establish stricter regulatory controls over all agrochemicals imported into and used within the country.

“This is not about impeding agricultural development,” clarified a representative from the Participatory Ecological Land Use Management organization. *“Rather, it’s about ensuring that our pursuit of agricultural productivity doesn’t come at the expense of public health and environmental sustainability.”*

Public Awareness Campaign

Following the media briefing, the coalition’s message gained significant traction across multiple communication channels. Their concerns and recommendations were featured in newspaper articles, policy briefs, television and radio programs, and various online publications, helping to elevate public awareness of this critical issue.

The organizations have pledged to continue their advocacy work, emphasizing that addressing the HHP challenge requires collaboration between government agencies, agricultural stakeholders, and civil society to develop sustainable alternatives that protect both human health and environmental integrity.

