



ADDRESSING THE RISKS OF HIGHLY HAZARDOUS PESTICIDES IN UGANDA: A CALL FOR ENHANCED AWARENESS AND CAPACITY BUILDING

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In Uganda, escalating agrochemical use among farmers for food production, coupled with concerns over chemical preservatives in foodstuffs, presents a growing food safety challenge. Studies indicate that farmers and traders often misuse agrochemicals, failing to adhere to recommended protocols due to limited awareness and capacity.



The Threat of Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs)

A concerning report by the Food Safety Coalition of Uganda (FoSCU) in 2024 revealed that nearly half of the pesticides used in Uganda are classified as Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs), posing significant risks to public and environmental health. HHPs are associated with a range of adverse effects, including carcinogenic, mutagenic, and reproductive toxicities, endocrine disruption, toxicity to bees, fetal harm upon inhalation, and extreme hazards to aquatic life.

CARITAS and FoSCU Take Action: Capacity Building for Safe Agrochemical Use

Recognizing the urgent need for intervention, CARITAS, a member of FoSCU, organized a one-day capacity-building session for farmer

association leaders and agricultural extension workers. The session, facilitated by experts from the FoSCU secretariat, focused on HHP identification and the responsible and safe use of agrochemicals while emphasizing the negative impact of HHPs on health and the environment.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The capacity-building session highlighted a critical gap: farmers and extension workers lack adequate knowledge regarding pesticide use. This underscores the urgent need for expanded training and empowerment programs to promote safe agrochemical practices.

Building on these findings and the insights gained from FoSCU's participation in the Harvest Money Expo 2025, the following recommendations are crucial for addressing the risks associated with HHPs in Uganda:

- ⦿ **Enhanced Training and Education:** Implement comprehensive training programs for farmers and extension workers on integrated pest management (IPM) strategies, safe handling and application of agrochemicals, and the identification of HHPs.
- ⦿ **Stricter Regulation and Enforcement:** Strengthen regulatory frameworks governing the importation, distribution, and use of pesticides, ensuring that only approved and properly labeled products are available to farmers. This directly supports the need for more robust enforcement of existing laws.
- ⦿ **Promotion of Safer Alternatives:** Encourage the adoption of safer and more sustainable pest control methods, such as biological control agents, bio pesticides, and improved agronomic practices. This reflects the need for innovation, highlighted by FoSCU's call for improved agricultural innovation.
- ⦿ **Awareness Campaigns:** Conduct public awareness campaigns to educate consumers about the risks associated with pesticide residues in food and the importance of purchasing from trusted sources. This aligns with FoSCU's strategic interventions around food-safety awareness.
- ⦿ **Research and Monitoring:** Invest in research to assess the long-term impacts of HHP exposure on human health and the environment, and establish monitoring systems to track pesticide residues in food and water sources.

FoSCU's Commitment

The Food Safety Coalition of Uganda (FoSCU) and its members remain steadfast in their commitment to advancing food safety in Uganda. Through collaborative efforts, FoSCU will continue to:

- ⦿ Advocate for policies that prioritize public and environmental health.
- ⦿ Empower farmers and communities with the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions about pesticide use.
- ⦿ Promote sustainable agricultural practices that minimize the reliance on HHPs.
- ⦿ Conduct research to inform evidence-based interventions.

FoSCU calls on all stakeholders, including government agencies, research institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector, to join forces in addressing the challenge of HHPs and creating a safer and more sustainable food system for all Ugandans. By working together, we can mitigate the risks associated with agrochemical use and ensure access to safe and nutritious food for present and future generations.



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