

Unearthed / Public Eye request for comment to CropLife International (sent by email on February 6, 2020)

We are writing because we are preparing to publish a joint investigation looking at sales of highly hazardous pesticides by the world's five biggest pesticide manufacturers.

These companies (Bayer, BASF, Corteva, FMC, Syngenta) comprise five of the six member companies of CropLife International. I have, of course, approached each of them individually to offer the opportunity to correct or comment upon the findings of our reporting that relate to them individually. However, our reporting will also look specifically at claims that CropLife has made about its membership as a group, and therefore I would like also to give CropLife an opportunity to comment on our findings ahead of publication.

Our investigation is based on an analysis of the agribusiness intelligence firm Phillips McDougall's AgrAspire database of crop protection sales for 2018. This database covers \$23.3bn of agrochemical sales (approx. 40% of the global crop protection market by value) across 43 countries. The data collected is on the leading products in the most important markets (specifically, the most popular products in the most valuable market segments in the countries that represent the biggest crop protection markets.)

We analysed this data using the [Pesticide Action Network International 2019 list of highly hazardous pesticides](#). The purpose was to understand how significant these pesticides that pose the highest levels of hazards to health or the environment are in the crop protection businesses of leading companies.

The key findings of the investigation in relation to this group of CropLife members as a whole are as follows:

- This group of companies had 773 different products in the sales data for that year that contained products classified as presenting high hazards to human health or the environment. These represented 41% of their leading products in 2018 (as identified by Phillips McDougall).
- In total, our analysis shows that the five CropLife International companies were responsible for \$13.4bn (58%) of the sales recorded in the PMD dataset. When those sales are broken down by active ingredient, we find that around 35% (\$4.8bn) was attributable to pesticides on the PAN list of highly hazardous pesticides.
- Of more than 300 pesticides that are on the PAN list, analysis of the PMD data shows that 160 were actively traded in the world's most important pesticide markets in 2018. Of that group, at least 97 were present in products sold by the five CropLife member companies.
- Among the biggest HHP sellers for the CropLife group were the following chemicals: Glyphosate; Chlorantraniliprole; Glufosinate; Cyproconazole; Thiamethoxam; Epoxiconazole; Lambda-Cyhalothrin; Acetochlor; Atrazine; Paraquat; Isoxaflutole; Imidacloprid; Fipronil; Flubendiamide; Propiconazole; Betacyfluthrin; Spinetoram; Bifenthrin; Diquat.
- Our analysis of the Phillips McDougall data shows that, these companies made the bulk of their HHP sales (57%) in low-and middle- income countries. HHPs represented 45% of these companies' sales in the average LMIC, and only 27% of sales in HICs.
- These findings contrast strongly with CropLife International's own analysis of its members' role in the HHP trade. The group states that an audit showed only 15% of the products sold

by its members qualify as HHPs. It also states that the vast majority of HHPs sold in developing countries are sold by companies that are not Croplife International members, and that HHPs sold by its members can be used safely and responsibly even in realistic conditions of use in low-income countries.

- Experts and campaigners who considered our findings said they showed a huge disconnect between what the Croplife companies are saying publicly and what they are actually doing.
- Experts and campaigners say the chemicals on the PAN list, including those listed above, present high hazards to human health and the environment, including acute poisoning of humans, health effects like cancer, reproductive failure and birth defects, and toxicity to bees and other pollinators.

Our questions for Croplife International are as follows:

- Do you have any comment to make on the above in general?
- Do you believe any of the statements above require correction or clarification, and if so, what supporting evidence can you provide us with?
- Do you accept that the chemicals listed above are highly hazardous pesticides? Would you regard any of them as not “highly hazardous”?
- What is your definition of highly hazardous pesticides?
- Your members’ recent audit found that approx. 15% of their products were HHPs, of which 10% could be used safely and responsibly, 2.5% required risk mitigation/withdrawal, 2.5% are under further evaluation. Could you please tell me which active ingredients were contained in the products within each of these categories?
- Many experts argue that HHPs can never safely be used in LMICs, because of poor governance and lack of regulation. How can your members making such a large proportion of HHP sales in LMICs?
- How can it be justified that some of your European members are making hundreds of millions of dollars a year selling pesticides in other countries that have been banned in their home markets more than a decade ago?
- How does Croplife respond to the complaint of campaigners that it lobbies in national and international fora to prevent the listing or banning of hazardous pesticides, and that its members strategically withdraw pesticides from markets to avoid impending bans, so as to allow these chemicals to continue to be sold in other markets with fewer restrictions?

Responses by CropLife International (received by email on February 7, 2020)

Please find below our feedback to your queries. We hope this information is helpful for your investigation and we are appreciative that you contacted us for comment. Please note that CropLife International does not comment on product specific questions or the commercial interests of our members. Our focus is to advocate on the principles of pesticide regulation and their implementation globally.

Regarding your questions on CropLife International’s voluntary portfolio review and our engagement in the FAO/WHO Highly Hazardous Pesticide guidelines, we are able to provide the following perspectives.

The voluntary portfolio review that you reference was conducted by CropLife International members between 2015 to 2016. The collective outcome of this review was presented at the Triple COP meeting of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions in May 2017. CropLife International member companies voluntarily evaluated their portfolios for Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) based on the eight criteria defined by the FAO/WHO HHP guidelines (officially published in 2016).

The approach by our members for their individual portfolio reviews was based on the following methodology: i) identification of HHPs in their respective portfolios based on the FAO/WHO guidelines, ii) conducting local use assessments to identify risks, with a particular focus on low income countries, iii) where risk concerns were raised, risk mitigations measures were implemented to ensure safety (e.g. formulation changes, application changes, withdrawal of products in crops of particular concern, etc.) and iv) where risk mitigation measures were found not to be effective, voluntary withdrawal of the product from that market.

This process is in line with the approach proposed by the FAO/WHO HHP guidelines in chapters 2 to 5 where the suggested course of action should be based on HHP identification, risk assessment and mitigation. It is important to note that the approved label sets the specific conditions (application rate, type and timing, personal protective equipment, pre-harvest interval and precautions, etc.) to ensure protection of applicators, bystanders, consumers and the environment in alignment with these risk assessments. Furthermore, the emphasis on local risk assessment for regulatory decision making versus hazard-based approaches should be acknowledged.

CropLife International is cognisant of the capability and capacity of local authorities to conduct risk assessment in several low income countries and is therefore actively supporting and promoting i) the FAO pesticide registration toolkit, and ii) is engaged in raising awareness with regulators of the use of the FAO toolkit.

In this context, CropLife International recently joined the [Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals](#) (GHS) commitment made by the High Ambition Alliance on Chemicals and Waste at the [Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management](#) (SAICM). The aim of this Alliance is to accelerate GHS implementation in countries ahead of ICCM5. Implementation of GHS by countries is critical for hazard classification and the first step for HHP management, which has been a core activity of CropLife International's capacity building efforts.

Regarding the 19 products you reference in your email (addressed to Gloria Jaconelli, 6/2/2020, 11:47) please note the following comments, which may explain the discrepancy between CropLife International's conclusions versus those put forward by Public Eye which have based their evaluation on the Pesticide Action Network (PAN) list:

- All of these 19 actives are registered in at least one OECD countries, 18 of them in at least four OECD countries. OECD registration and the respective data packages stand for the highest safety standards worldwide.
- Among the list of 19, 18 are registered in the United States of America and 12 are registered in the European Union.
- Six of the actives on PANs HHP List 2019 are based primarily on criteria that are not aligned with the FAO/WHO HHP guidelines. The criteria cited by PAN are often environmental criteria that are not agreed or yet endorsed by the FAO/WHO Joint Meeting on Pesticide Management (JMPM). CropLife International members recognize environmental risk in their assessment of all pesticides.
- One of the actives is registered for organic farming production in the European Union.
- As a general note, pesticides identified on the PAN list are often classified based on the acute toxicity of the active ingredient rather than the formulated product, which is not consistent

with practical use. In addition a pesticide may not be registered in a country because it is not needed or uneconomic, not only because of its health profile.

CropLife International members support the [International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management](#) and agree with the principle of pesticide risk reduction. We support countries to identify, and if necessary, remove HHPs from their markets. We also encourage risk-based decision making in line with article 7.5 of the Code, which states that market withdrawals should be based on local risk assessment. When risk mitigation measures or good marketing practices are insufficient to ensure that the product can be handled without unacceptable risks to humans and the environment, then market withdrawal should be considered.

CropLife International members are engaged and open to a dialogue with stakeholders on the risk reduction of pesticides. As innovation based companies, there is an interest to continuously improve the safety of our products for human health and the environment. In this context please also refer to our continued stewardship activities regarding responsible use, training on integrated pest management and the promotion of personal protective equipment. The appropriate management and use of our products helps to underpin sustainable agriculture and safeguard public health and the environment. For more information, please refer to [several case studies](#) highlighting our activities on the sound management of pesticides.