

Fax to:
YB Datuk (Dr.) Effendi Norwawi
Minister of Agriculture
The Ministry of Agriculture of Malaysia
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... April 03

RE: Support of the Decision by the Government of Malaysia to Ban the Pesticide Paraquat

Your Excellency,

I have been informed that on 27 August 2002 the Malaysian Government decided to ban and phase out the production of the pesticide Paraquat in your country. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you for this groundbreaking decision.

Paraquat is a well known poison for which there is no antidote. In its 40 years of being in use around the world Paraquat has caused many severe poisonings to workers and farmers using it. The decision by your government to ban this controversial product is well justified. It will help to protect agricultural workers, farmers and consumers, as well as the environment as a whole. I therefore applaud you for taking such leadership to make Malaysia a pioneering country in Asia in banning and phasing out the use of Paraquat.

Concerns over the negative impacts of Paraquat have been growing across the world. Many European countries (e.g. Austria, Denmark, Finland, Slovenia, Sweden) have enacted bans or severe restrictions on the use of Paraquat due to its acute toxicity, the absence of antidote, health and environmental concerns. In other countries strict guidelines are applied. For example, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency allows its purchase and use solely by certified applicators. In terms of developing countries, Kuwait has banned Paraquat while Indonesia, Korea (Republic) and Togo have enacted restrictions on its use.

In Switzerland, where the Syngenta corporation – the biggest manufacturer of Paraquat – is based, this pesticide has not been approved for use since the end of 1989. In November 2002 the Swiss Federal government informed the Swiss Parliament that it will, in an effort to protect developing countries from harmful consequences of this highly toxic pesticide, support its inclusion in Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention (on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade).

It has come to my attention that the agrochemical industry has made appeals and undertaken attempts to persuade the Malaysian government to repeal its decision to ban and phase out Paraquat. It appears that the Syngenta corporation is engaged in such lobbying. I am very worried about this.

Your Excellency, I urge you to resist these pressures and to consider going further and deciding on an immediate, outright ban on the hazardous pesticide Paraquat.

Yours sincerely,
(name and signature)