

Bukidnon Bans Endosulfan

Walter I. Balane / MindaNews

MALAYBALAY CITY (04 August 2008) -- The provincial board of Bukidnon has passed an ordinance banning the use of pesticide endosulfan or its derivatives in plantations in Bukidnon.

Pushed by boardmember Nemesio Beltran Jr., who initiated an inquiry on the use of the chemical in Del Monte Philippines, Inc., the ordinance was passed on August 1 during the board's regular session.

Beltran's committee report on the inquiry cited the stand of a Fertilizers and Pesticides Authority (FPA) official during the local endosulfan inquiry.

Ma. Sonia Calleja, FPA Northern Mindanao regional director, told the provincial board she would be happy if the pesticides would be banned. She has since recommended for its banning.

Beltran's report also cited in his en banc committee confirmations from national health officials that "at toxic levels and following ingestion, endosulfan can cause death or affect the central nervous system, manifesting convulsions, and may also include cardiovascular symptoms, and for animals, long term exposure to the chemical can also damage their kidneys, testes and liver."

The ordinance was passed five months ahead of the expiration on December 31, 2008 of the three-year authorization issued by the FPA board to DMPI and Dole Philippines, Inc.

The two firms were issued the authorization as "institutional users" allowed for restricted use of the chemical that has been banned since 1993. Both companies have appealed to the board to be allowed to use the chemical to control the pink disease that has affected their canned pineapple products for export.

Boardmember Roland Deticio, while stressing he was not objecting, said due process should have been observed in the approval of the ordinance. He said endosulfan should be banned but that a public hearing should be conducted.

The provincial board decided to call off inviting DMPI to the inquiries over the firm's admission they are using the chemical. Some of the board members also said they took it from the stand of the FPA's regional director.

Deticio said the ordinance should be passed with due process to avoid legal complications. Beltran said the ordinance could supersede the authorization given to DMPI. Boardmember Rogelio Lago also said there would still be due process if they will pass now and give the firm time to appeal the measure within 30 days after publication of the ordinance.

Meanwhile, the city council of Malaybalay passed a resolution last week urging the FPA board not to renew its authorization issued to DMPI once it expires in December.