



Chilean Health Secretary will ban lindano as a result of RAP-Chile's strong campaign

Santiago, December 13th, 2007

Years of public pressure, diffusion efforts and advocacy done by Alliance for a Better Quality of Life RAP-Chile (*Alianza por una Mejor Calidad de Vida* RAP-Chile), resulted in banning of lindane import, production, retail and use. This official announcement targets lindane's use in public health as active principle in lice and scabies treatments for human beings and animals.

Chilean Health Secretary María Soledad Barría (MD) addressed a letter to Alliance's leaders, María Elena Rozas, Pesticide Net Action Network Southern Cone, Alicia Muñoz, Association of Rural and Indigenous Women (ANAMURI), Elizabeth Maturana, Research on Organic Agriculture (CIAL NGO) and Lucio Cuenca, Latin American Environmental Conflicts Watch (OLCA).

These grassroots organizations had been campaigning on a ban on the pesticide lindane for the last ten years and more. Carcinogenic effects of lindane, its bioaccumulation and persistence in the environment and in human fat tissues have been proved in many scientific researches that classed lindane as POP. This scientific data was used as background for this campaign.

International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN) and Pesticide Action Network (PAN) provided important foundations for our campaign in Chile. This successful crusade closes a huge contradiction in legal regulations, because lindane was still registered for public health in spite of its banning for agriculture uses in 1998. That year, public pressure of Alliance for a Better Quality of Life (RAP-Chile) resulted in banning on lindane by public agency Agriculture and Livestock Service (Servicio Agrícola y Ganadero SAG).

Health Secretary decided currently to extend lindane banning to organ chloride compound HCH (hexachlorocyclohexane) a synthetic chemical that exists in eight chemical forms called isomers, one of them named lindane: gamma-HCH (or γ -HCH). This extension points to avoid and prevent use of other HCH isomer as an alternative to lindane.

1a y 1b WHO class pesticides

In her December 12th letter, Health Secretary Barría also answers other requests and concerns expressed by these organizations. Barría appreciates and supports the recent legal motion to ban import, transport and retail of WHO class extremely hazardous (1a) and very hazardous (1b) pesticides. The bill has just been sent to Chilean Senate in second Constitutional procedure. Mrs. Barría explains that her office has no regulatory competence about pesticide registration for agriculture uses. She states: "We have started a process of exchange of points of view with Agriculture Secretary in order to join efforts and make advance the process of phasing out the use of extremely hazardous and very hazardous toxic substances, especially those classed as 1a and 1b by World Health Organization.

Secretary Barría's letter also accepts our proposal to watch pesticides' residues in food for Chilean market and announces a Pesticide Residues Control Program aimed to strengthen the Innocuity of Food Program. This new initiative will focus on national and imported primary farming products and aims to "guarantee enforcement of Pesticide Residues Maximum Limits" and to avoid "adverse effects on public health". Health Public Institute (*Instituto de Salud Pública* ISP) and Maule region's Public Laboratory

(in Central Chile) will take over watch on pesticide residues on fruits and vegetables for human consume.

Health Secretary also informs us about a list of actions aimed to improve Chilean population's health protection, and overcome current fails in pesticide poisoning notification registry. These actions are: building capacities in public and private health workers so that they can timely identify pesticide poisoning; creation of Regional and Local Pesticide Public Committees whose mission is to strengthen inter agencies action; supervise labor places whenever massive poisoning occurs and watch public health system centers' enforcement of mandatory notification of pesticide acute poisoning.

Health Secretary Soledad Barría closes her letter thanking Alliance for a Better Quality of Life's representatives for "the valuable collaboration you have had by pushing this and other motions related to improve our population's quality of life, and I declare my best will to keep our communication channels in order to get your suggestions and also tell you about the follow up of the informed initiatives".

ALIANZA POR UNA MEJOR CALIDAD DE VIDA (RAP-Chile)

Alliance for a Better Quality of Life, RAP-Chile

Formed by:

Association of Rural and Indigenous Women/ *Asociación de Mujeres Rurales e indígenas*
(ANAMURI)

Latin American Environmental Conflicts Watch /*Observatorio Latinoamericano de Conflictos Ambientales* (OLCA)

Research on Organic Agriculture (CIAL NGO)/ *Corporación de Investigación en Agricultura Alternativa* CIAL

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