



# Food for Thought

## Chemicals in common foods highlight urgency of POPs Treaty

May 4, 2006

**Dear Delegates,**

The decisions you are making at the COP2 meeting in Geneva are important, **right now**, to the health and well being of people around the world. Every day, families are taking POPs into their bodies in the air they breathe, the food they eat and the beverages they drink.

We offer these snacks as a symbolic reminder of the importance and urgency of your work. Not only are traditional foods of indigenous groups in the Arctic contaminated with dangerous POPs, but common foods consumed around the world are polluted with these harmful chemicals as well. Below is a small sampling of recent studies showing persistent organic pollutants in common foods and beverages.

**SOFT DRINKS** – POPs pesticides were found in 12 brands of soft drink sampled by independent researchers in India in 2003. The insecticide lindane was found in 100% of the soft drink samples tested, at average levels 21 times the European Economic Community (EEC) standard. DDT and its metabolites (DDD and DDE) were detected in 81% of the samples tested. Average DDT and metabolite concentrations were 15 times European limits.<sup>i</sup>

**CHOCOLATE** – Lindane, DDT and DDE were the most commonly found pesticides in milk chocolate sampled by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 2003.<sup>ii</sup> In 1999, dioxins were found in Belgian chocolate containing milk from cows fed dioxin-tainted animal feed.<sup>iii</sup> In 1998, residues of lindane and its isomers were found in chocolate sold in British supermarkets.<sup>iv</sup>

**BUTTER** – Dioxins, PCBs, DDT, lindane and its isomers and other chlorinated pesticides have been found in butter samples taken around the world. One study released in 2000 found POPs in butter samples from 23 countries.<sup>v</sup> Many additional studies, including data collected by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, have documented POPs in butter samples.<sup>vi</sup>

**EGGS** – In a 2005 study, the International POPs Elimination Network sampled free-range chicken eggs in 17 countries. All samples collected contained dioxins and PCBs. Seventy percent of the samples exceeded the European limit for dioxins in eggs, and 60% were above proposed EU limits for PCBs in eggs. Lindane and its breakdown product, *beta*-HCH, were also found in all samples collected.<sup>vii</sup>

**MILK** – Swiss cow's milk was found to contain dioxin when tested in 1984, 1990 and 2001. While levels have decreased significantly over that time period, dioxins are still present in milk supplies.<sup>viii</sup>

We urge you to enjoy these snacks as a symbolic reminder of the importance of your work. We are not suggesting that the soft drinks and chocolate we serve today should be avoided or contain dangerous levels of POPs chemicals.

As you complete your work at COP2, please make choices that will most effectively speed the phase out of these dangerous chemicals and best protect the health of current and future generations.

Hoping for a toxics free future,

### **Concerned NGOs participating in COP2**

Alaska Community Action on Toxics  
Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment  
Arnika Association, Czech Republic  
Center for International Environmental Law  
Commonweal, USA  
Day Hospital Institute, Egypt  
Environmental Health Fund, USA  
Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives  
Indigenous Environmental Network, USA  
International Indian Treaty Council  
International POPs Elimination Network  
Island Sustainability Alliance, Cook Islands  
National Toxics Network Inc., Australia  
Pesticide Action Network Africa  
Pesticide Action Network Mexico (RAPAM)  
Pesticide Action Network North America  
Pesticide Action Network Philippines  
Red de Acción en Plaguicidas y sus Alternativas de America Latina (RAPAL)  
Thanal, India  
Toxics Link, India

<sup>i</sup> Sources: Down to Earth. August 15, 2003. *Colonisation's Dirty Dozen, Bottled Water Norms Notified*, Science and Environment on-line, <http://www.downtoearth.org.in>. Hindu Business Line. August 5, 2003. *Pepsi, Coke soft drinks contain pesticides*: Reuters. August 12, 2003. *Pepsi to be Tested for Toxins in India*. CSE Press Release. August 5, 2003. *Hard Truths about Soft Drinks*. See Centre for Science and the Environment <http://www.cseindia.org>.

<sup>ii</sup> Food and Drug Administration. June 2003. *Total Diet Study: Summary of Residues Found Ordered by Food, Market Baskets 91-3 - 01-4*. See <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~acrobat/TDS1byfd.pdf>.

<sup>iii</sup> See notice from New Zealand Ministry of Health, *Processed Foods from Belgium, The Netherlands and France Which May Contain High Levels of Dioxin* at <http://www.moh.govt.nz/dioxin.html>. See also “Belgian Chocolate Banned” in *The Chocolate Scoop* at <http://www.virtualchocolate.com/chocolatescoop/scoop06.cfm>, 1999.

<sup>iv</sup> Government sampling of chocolate in 1998 found that three quarters of the samples contained residues of lindane, and 20 out of 20 of food industry samples contained lindane *Annual Report of the Working Party on Pesticides Residues*, 1998, cited in Pesticide Action Network-UK Press Release. December 4, 2001. *Lindane Lurking in Easter Treats*. See <http://www.pan-uk.org/banlindane/lindchoc.htm>. See also <http://www.sundayherald.com/print23413>.

<sup>v</sup> Santillo, D, Stringer, R.L. & Johnston, P.A. 2000. *The Global Distribution of PCBs, Organochlorine Pesticides, Polychlorinated Dibenzo-p-dioxins and polychlorinated dibenzofurans Using Butter as an Integrative Matrix*. Greenpeace Research Laboratories Technical Note 13/00.

<sup>vi</sup> Food and Drug Administration. June 2003. *Total Diet Study: Summary of Residues Found Ordered by Food, Market Baskets 91-3 - 01-4*. See <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~acrobat/TDS1byfd.pdf>. See also Schafer, K., Kegley, S. & Patton S.. March 2001. *Nowhere to Hide: Persistent Toxic Chemicals in the U.S. Food Supply*. Pesticide Action Network North America/Commonweal, San Francisco. See <http://www.panna.org/resources/documents/nowhereToHide.pdf>.

<sup>vii</sup> IPEN. 2005. *The Global Egg Report and The Next Generation POPs: PBDEs, Lindane*. Also available: 17 Hot Spot Egg Reports at <http://www.oztoxics.org/ipepweb>.

<sup>viii</sup> Schmid, P. et al. 2003. “Old Sins Throw Long Shadows – Old and Emerging Persistent Organic Pollutants in the Swiss Environment.” *Chimia* Vol 57, 509-513.