Endosulfan one step closer to listing under international toxics treaty

Pesticide Action Network applauds move toward prior informed consent requirement for trade of toxic pesticide endosulfan

Pesticide Action Network (PAN), an international network focused on protecting community health and the environment, applauds the recent recommendation by government chemical experts that politicians include the toxic chemical endosulfan on the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) list of the Rotterdam Convention in 2008.

“This deadly pesticide is a leading cause of poisoning worldwide,” says Carina Weber of PAN Germany. “Communities should not have to suffer from exposure to endosulfan when so much is known about its dangers.”

PAN has been highlighting the dangers of endosulfan through its regional centers in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America for more than two decades. Endosulfan is acutely toxic, is known to disrupt the hormone system, can damage the human reproductive system and has been linked to breast cancer among other human health effects. Davo Simplice Vodouhe (OBEPAB, Benin): “It is the second most widely used insecticide in cotton production, and has been linked to many incidents of pesticide poisoning, sometimes fatal, among West African cotton farmers.” This is highlighted in PAN's recent report "Living with Poison".

Endosulfan has been linked to the occurrence of disproportionate incidence of severe birth defects, among other health impacts, among communities exposed to the pesticide in many countries like India. Effective alternatives are available; and it is already deregistered or banned in many countries.

“PAN Asia and the Pacific in collaboration with partners in India and other countries in Asia, have documented the negative effects of endosulfan on communities", states Jennifer Mourin of the PAN Asia Pacific regional centre. "Endosulfan is extremely hazardous especially under conditions of use in the South, and many Asian governments have banned or restricted its use. Endosulfan's addition on the PIC list is long overdue."

“The continued use of this pesticide jeopardizes human health and the environment everywhere because of its ability to travel long distances on air and water currents, and its persistence in the environment and human bodies,” says Medha Chandra of PAN North America. “It’s high time governments take steps to protect communities from endosulfan, and addition to the PIC list will be an important step in the right direction.”

The experts’ recommendation to add endosulfan confirms that the toxin meets the technical criteria for inclusion in the Treaty, and gives the 116 governments that have ratified the Rotterdam Convention a clear mandate to definitively add endosulfan to the PIC list at the Conference of Parties in November 2008. This will be the final step,
giving governments around the world a fair chance at keeping this deadly pesticide out of their countries and preventing illegal dumping within their borders. PAN will continue to keep up the pressure to ensure that financial and political interests do not further delay the inevitable control of this dangerous, outdated, and replaceable pesticide.

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(1) Under the Rotterdam Convention or “PIC Treaty,” once a chemical has been banned in two or more countries in different regions of the world, it can be added to the PIC list. Countries exporting chemicals on the PIC list must inform importing countries that the chemical has been listed, and importing countries can refuse trade in PIC listed chemicals that could threaten the health of their communities. The Chemical Review Committee, a panel of experts from those governments that have ratified the treaty, recommended that governments consider addition of endosulfan to the list when they meet 2008.