



Pesticide Use in Poland



Pesticide use, issues and how to promote sustainable agriculture in Poland

PAN Germany is part of an international network of more than 600 citizens groups working to oppose the misuse of pesticides and to promote sustainable agriculture and ecologically sound pest management.

PAN Germany provides information on pesticide risks and campaigns for alternatives.

The Polish Ecological Club (PKE) is active in promoting sustainable development and improving the state of the environment in Poland. PKE Gliwice Chapter has over 10 years of experience educating the community and organizing citizens to provide safe alternative food products as well as promoting sustainable agriculture methods of production.

**Fact Sheet
2004**

Agriculture in Poland

Polish agriculture seems to be closer to environmental solutions than any other country in Europe. Almost 50 years of communist efforts to collectivise this sector of economy did not bring any spectacular success. Most of the farmland is still in private hands (92.2%, only 7.8% is owned by the government), farms are small, multi-functional and land management is extensive.

38% of the Polish population live in rural areas, 19% of which work directly in agriculture. Furthermore 43% of all unemployed people live in the rural areas (15% of the Polish people are unemployed). At the same time the educational level is low, only 1.3% of the habitants living there have a university degree.

Polish agriculture is differentiated: you find very well developed (in the modern, western meaning) big farms in the western part of Poland and poor small farms in the East. So it is not easy to find one recipe for the whole country.

Agriculture plays an important role in the Polish economy. However, since the last decade the decreasing share of farming in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is observed (11.8% of GDP in 1988, 6.4% in 1994 and only 3.3% in 2001). Arable lands in Poland account for 59% (18.4 million ha) of the total area of the country with a rate of 0.48 ha of arable land per capita. But the Polish soils are quite poor (mainly III, IV class of fertility).

The last decade brought great economic changes, which touched Polish farmers more than other groups of citizens. Now Polish agriculture is extensive and sustainable in an environmental sense more by the default than by the farmers will. The yield of extensive farming is relatively low due to low usage of pesticides and fertilizers.



Therefore vast areas of the arable farmland could easily be converted into organic agriculture. On the other hand there is a tendency to intensify the agriculture production, linking up with structural changes and an increasing pesticide use.

Pesticide Use

Compared to highly industrialized EU member states the average use of pesticides in agriculture in Poland is very low. But it is different from region to region and mainly depends on the size of the farms.

The list of the pesticide active ingredients authorized in Poland, obtained from the Polish Plant Protection Institute in 2001, includes 385 substances authorized for the use in pesticide

products and 63 pesticide active ingredients which are banned in Poland. Figure 1 shows an

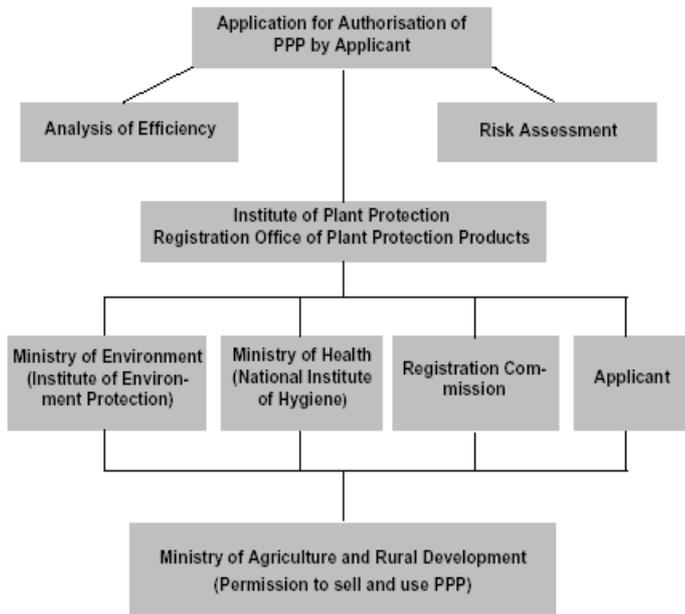


Figure 1: Institutions involved in the authorization process of plant protection products

overview of the authorization process. In 2002 a new monitoring system, based on the English example, came into force. It is a four-year-cycle of monitoring 10 of the most important Polish crops (potatoes, cereals, legumes, sugar beets, oil plants, fibre plants, corn, vegetables, strawberries and orchards). The new monitoring system showed data very different from the previous ones.

The use of pesticide products on potato plantations was monitored in 2002. Inspectors collected approx. 7,500 questionnaires - every farmer is obliged to record and keep evidence of measures, which gave the base for this analysis. The average use was 3.5 kg/ha (of active ingredient). The research showed also how Poland is divided in terms of pesticide use - the very high amount of pesticide products in the western part of Poland about 6 kg/ha and a very low in the eastern part - about 1.5 kg/ha. The previously collected data (with a different system) had shown much lower use: 0.5-0.6 kg of active ingredient per ha.

However, the average amount of pesticide used is increasing (Figure 2).

Pesticide issues

The policy related to the pesticide issues in Poland seems to be going in the right direction. The harmonization process with EU legislation is very advanced. FAO recommendations concerning technical conditions and safety rules during storage and handling of plant protection products are fully implemented, which has resulted in better state and continuously improving of storage and handling. Also a list of 63 banned active substances has been established and all active substances mentioned on the Helcom list are forbidden¹.

On the other hand, the results of the EU pesticide residue monitoring in 2001 showed that 40% of the samples of fruits, vegetables and cereal contained detectable pesticide residues, in contrast to 14.6% in Poland (2001). From this point of view the EU agriculture and pesticide policy is not the best model for Poland respectively. Poland should avoid the mistakes the European policy made in the past.

In fact the very big pesticide problem still seems to be the old forgotten storage places (obsolete pesticides stocks). The chemicals found there are usually mixed and utilization of such mixture is very difficult, dangerous or permitted. More

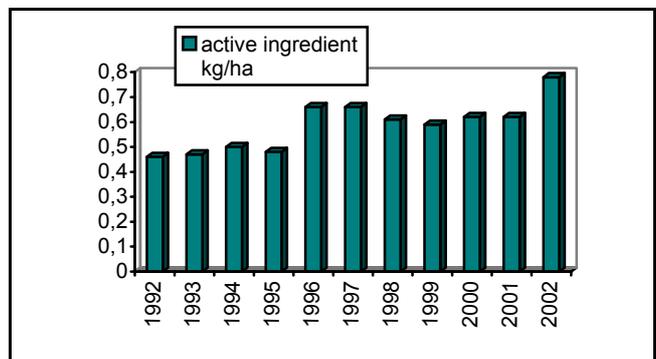


Figure 2: Pesticides use in Poland 1992-2002 (kg/ha)
Source: Yearly Book of Central Statistical Office

over many of those places were not well prepared for storing hazardous substances, so the environmental damage is very big - caused by i. e. leaching the pesticides into the ground water. The data on the extent of the problem is inaccessible and variable. In Poland numbers of pesticide stocks diverge widely from the official

¹ Baltic Marine Environment Protection (Helsinki) Commission, <http://www.helcom.fi/>

Polish government statement of 18,000 tons to 60,000 or even 65,000 tons¹.

The evaluation of pesticides authorized in Poland² regarding their human and environmental toxicity showed that:

- ◇ 385 pesticides (active ingredients) were authorized for the use in pesticide products in December 2001,
- ◇ 20 pesticides are classified as Extremely or Highly Hazardous (acute toxicity, WHO) and 54 substances are classified as Very Toxic or Toxic (acute toxicity, EU),
- ◇ 32 pesticides are neurotoxic cholinesterase inhibitors (U.S. EPA, WHO),
- ◇ 7 pesticides are characterized as endocrine disruptors of high concern (EU),
- ◇ 18 pesticides are possible carcinogenic (carcinogenicity category 3, EU) and 4 are possible mutagenic (mutagenicity category 3, EU),
- ◇ 5 substances may cause harm to the unborn child, and 10 pesticides present possible risks of harm to the unborn child (EU),
- ◇ 121 pesticides are „Dangerous for the Environment“ (EU).

2) Neumeister, L. & E. Hajduk (2003): Pesticides in Central and Eastern European Countries - Usage, Registration, Identification and Evaluation (Part 1). Download under: www.pan-germany.org.

Towards organic agriculture

The EU accession brings many questions for Polish agriculture and rural areas. Very weak Polish agri-policy and reforms of Common Agriculture Policy of European Union do not clearly define the way of how Polish agriculture will develop in the future. It still seems that it would be easier to develop environmentally friendly practices in agriculture, especially in the regions where the farms are extensive.

Organic agriculture could be the solution for the farmers, who could get higher prices for their products and state support for this kind of production, and for the environment, where the natural values would not be broken. But at the same time it is very important to develop rural policies, which would activate a rural society and improve living conditions in these areas. All these changes need political will. In 2001, when

2) Vijgen, J. (2003): Pesticides in Central and Eastern Europe. Pesticide News No. 59, March 2003, page 19.

the organic agriculture law came into force, we could have been very optimistic, because it created the legal bases for the existence, the development and the support of organic agriculture in Poland. For 2004 the situation with subsidies for organic production is unclear. The close accession date will probably cause much change – governmental payments will be replaced with EU subsidies due to the Rural Development Plan framework. In 2002 0.11% of arable land was under organic cultivation.

Main Targets for NGO Actions

NGOs working on pesticide issues are very few in Poland. The most important actions taken were actions for proper utilization of pesticide wastes and the installation of an obsolete pesticides stocks inventory. As the pesticide use in Poland is not very big compared to the use in other European countries, the introduction of environmentally friendly practices in Poland may be easier than anywhere else.

NGOs should:

- ⇒ cooperate to strengthen the development of organic farming as well as sustainable solutions in agriculture (i.e. agri-environmental measures or promotion of replacing artificial pesticides with biological ones),
- ⇒ actively participate in policy debates on agriculture policy on a national and European level,
- ⇒ demand to be fully included in the consultation process for harmonization with EU laws and policies, especially strategic documents and monitoring of their implementation,
- ⇒ participate in the monitoring bodies for agriculture and pesticide policy.

National Contacts and Links in Poland

Laws related to plant protection products issues:

Act of 12 July 1995 on protection of cultivated plants amended by Act of 16 February 2001 (Journal of Laws, No 22, 248)

Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Economy of 10 January 1991 (Journal of Laws No 14, 64) on safety and hygiene rules at applying and storing pesticides and mineral and artificial fertilisers in agriculture amended by the Decree of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of 24 June 2002 (Journal of Laws, No 99, 896) .

Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Economy of 12 March, 1996 concerning detailed principles of granting authorization of plant protection products (PPP) to be placed on the market, amended by the Decree of 5 March,

2002 (Journal of Laws, No 24, 250).

Decree of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of 11 February 1999 on detailed principles of the inspection of plant protection equipment (Journal of Laws, No 20, 175), amended by the Decree of 15 March 2001 (Journal of Laws, No 30, 349).

Decree of the Minister of Agriculture and Food Economy of 20 September, 2001 concerning detailed demands from a training unit (Journal of Laws, No 114, 1222).

Decree of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of 4 October 2001 on technical requirements for sprayers (Journal of Laws, No 121, 1303).

Decree of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of 15 November 2001 on the inspection of sprayers (Journal of Laws, No 137, 1544).

Polish Standard of 19 April 1999. PN-C-04657 Plant Protection Products. Packing, Storage and Transport.

Handbook of Plant Protection. Principles of safety and efficient use of methods and plant protection products. Edited by the Plant Protection Institute, Poznan, 1994.

Responsible ministries and authorization bodies:

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

ul. Wspólna 30, 00-930 Warsaw

Phone: +48 22 6231000

Web page: www.minrol.gov.pl

Ministry of Environment

ul. Wawelska 52/54, 00-922 Warsaw

Phone: +48 22 5792900

Web page: www.mos.gov.pl

Ministry of Health

ul. Miodowa 15, 00-952 Warszawa

Phone: +48 22 634 96 00

Web page: www.mz.gov.pl

State Inspection for Environment Protection

ul. Wawelska 52/54, 00-922 Warsaw

Phone: +48 22 825 00 01

Web page: www.gios.gov.pl

Plant Protection and Seed Service

ul. Wspólna 30, 00-930 Warsaw

Phone: +48 22 6232302

Web page: www.iorin.gov.pl

Institute of Plant Protection

ul. Mieczurina 20, 60-318 Poznan

Phone: +48 61 8674951

Web page: www.ior.poznan.pl

NGOs working on sustainable agriculture issues:

Coalition to Support Organic Agriculture

ul. Kaszubska 2, Phone: +48 32 2318591

e-mail: biuro@pkegliwice.pl

web page: www.pkegliwice.pl

ECEAT-POLAND

Bukówka 71

58-240 Lubawka

IUCN Office for Central Europe

ul. Narbutta 40/21, 02-541 Warsaw

Phone: +48 22 8810552

e-mail: iucn@iucn-ce.org.pl

web page: www.iucn-ce.org.pl

Polski Klub Ekologiczny

ul. Sławkowska 26A, 31-014 Kraków

Phone: +48 12 4232047

e-mail: biuro@zgpke.most.org.pl

Sekcja Rolnictwa Ekologicznego i Ekoturystyki „SIEWCA”

Studenckie Koło Naukowe przy katedrze Ogólnej Uprawy

Roli i Roślin, Akademia Rolnicza we Wrocławiu,

ul. Norwida 25 50-375 Wrocław,

Phone: +48 71 3205465

e-mail: siewca@star.ar.wroc.pl

web page: www.siewca.hg.pl

Społeczny Instytut Ekologiczny,

ul. Raszyńska 32/44, 02-026 Warszawa

Phone: +48 22 6689792

e-mail: ewa@gmo-bio.pl, indian@bore.most.org.pl

web page: www.gmo-bio.pl

Stowarzyszenie AGRO BIO PLON,

ul. Ks. Kard. S. Wyszyńskiego 70/126,

42-200 Częstochowa, Phone: +48 34 3770119

e-mail: S.Kreczko@odr.net.pl

Stowarzyszenie Kulturalno-Ekologiczne ZIARNO,

Grzybów 1/2, 09-553 Słubice

Phone: +48 71 24 / 2778196

e-mail: ewapeter@promail.pl

Stowarzyszenie Producentów Żywności Metodami Eko-

logicznymi EKOLAND, 11-704 Uźranki 40

phone: +48 87 4213055, 89 / 7423680

e-mail: ekolandow@free.ngo.pl, koziraj@cso.pl

web page: www.ekoland.org.pl

Związek Gmin Rolniczych i Ekologicznych EKOROL,

ul. Wesoła 51, 25-363 Kielce, Tel: +48 41 3430342

e-mail: ekorol@complex.com.pl

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Principal Author: Ewa Hajduk (PKE Gliwice Chapter)

Editor: Susanne Smolka (PAN Germany)

Pestizid Aktions-Netzwerk e.V. (PAN Germany)

Nernstweg 32, 22765 Hamburg, Germany

Phone: +49(0)40-399 19 10-0, Fax: +49(0)40-390 75 20

E-mail: info@pan-germany.org, www.pan-germany.org

Polski Klub Ekologiczny Kolo Miejskie w Gliwicach

(PKE Gliwice Chapter)

ul Kaszubska 2, 44-100 Gliwice, Poland

Phone: +48-32 23 18 591

biuro@pkegliwice.pl, www.pkegliwice.pl

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