

## Information provided by Fernando Ramirez's



Syngenta's advertisement in Costa Rica for the herbicide Gramoxone (containing paraquat) promised agricultural bonds as a prize for the purchase of this pesticide.

The ad even dared to say that when using the bonds money, farmers would be ready to improve their agriculture practices. Paraquat is responsible for many cases of poisoning in Costa Rica (Wesseling C, Hogstedt C, Picado A, and Johansson L, Unintentional fatal paraquat poisonings among agricultural workers in Costa Rica: a report of fifteen cases, American Journal of Industrial Medicine 32 (5), 433-441, 1997 <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/abstract/49461/>), and every effort should be made to reduce its use, and to develop safer alternatives based on strategies of Integrated Pest Management.

A letter about this violation of the FAO Code was sent to FAO by professor Fernando Ramírez Muñoz (a member of Instituto Regional de Estudios en Sustancias Tóxicas, Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, and Red de Acción en Plaguicidas y sus Alternativas para América Latina (RAP-AL). Ramirez got an answer from Shivaji Pandey, Director of FAO's Plant Production and Protection Division: "We will consider your letter under the Ad Hoc Monitoring procedure as described in the Guidelines on Monitoring and Observance of the Code of Conduct (2006)."

### ***Here is Fernando Ramirez's letter to FAO:***

April 17, 2007

Dr Jacques Diouf,  
Director General  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla  
00100 Rome, Italy

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you to express our concern about an advertising campaign by Syngenta in Costa Rica for the product Gramoxone, containing the active ingredient paraquat.

We believe that this campaign infringes the "International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides" Article 11.2.18 which requires that "advertisements

and promotional activities should not include inappropriate incentives or gifts to encourage the purchase of pesticides". The advertisement offers to those purchasing Gramoxone the chance to win one thousand dollars in inputs: "Gánese C 500.000 colones en insumos. Busque el cupón desprendible en las diferentes presentaciones de GRAMOXONE, llénelo y dépositelo en el buzón ubicado en su almacén de insumos. Así tendrá la oportunidad de ganar uno de los tres bonos por C 500.000 en insumos cada uno, que le ayudará a mejorar sus buenas prácticas agrícolas". ("Win C500.000 in agricultural inputs. Look for the desprendible coupon in the different GRAMOXONE commercial presentations, fill it and deposit it in the mailbox located in your store of inputs. This way you will have the opportunity to gain one of three agricultural bonds for C500.000 each one in inputs, that help you to improve yours good agricultural practices").

Gifts and offers of this kind are against the spirit of the Code of Conduct, and can encourage pesticide users to buy more of the product than they require to increase their chances of winning. Paraquat is responsible for many cases of poisoning and ill-health in Costa Rica (Wesseling C, Hogstedt C, Picado A, and Johansson L, Unintentional fatal paraquat poisonings among agricultural workers in Costa Rica: a report of fifteen cases, American Journal of Industrial Medicine 32 (5), 433-441, 1997 <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/abstract/49461/ABSTRACT>), and every effort should be made to reduce its use, and to develop safer alternatives based on strategies of Integrated Pest Management.

We would be grateful if you would assess this infringement, and draw attention of those in the company responsible for implementing the Code of Conduct to this campaign in Costa Rica with a view to preventing future advertisements of this kind.

Please let me know if you would like any further information. Advertisement example attached.

Yours sincerely,

Fernando Ramírez Muñoz  
Ingeniero Agrónomo  
Instituto Regional de Estudios en Sustancias Tóxicas  
Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica  
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Cc: Gero Vaagt ([gero.vaagt@fao.org](mailto:gero.vaagt@fao.org))  
Senior Officer  
Pest Management Group, Plant Protection Service  
Plant Production and Protection Division  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
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**Here is the answer of the FAO:**



联合国  
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FOOD AND  
AGRICULTURE  
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ORGANISATION  
DES NATIONS  
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ORGANIZACION  
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Our Ref:

Your Ref:

20 GIU. 2007

Dear Mr. Ramirez Muñoz,

We acknowledge receipt of your letter of 17 April 2007 addressed to Dr. Jacques Diouf, Director-General of FAO, in which you express concern about the manner in which paraquat is being advertised in Costa Rica.

Article 12.9 of the International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides invites NGOs and other interested parties to monitor activities related to the implementation of the Code and to report these to the Director-General of FAO.

We will consider your letter under the *Ad-Hoc* Monitoring procedure as described in the Guidelines on Monitoring and Observance of the Code of Conduct (2006).

We thank you for your effort and will keep you informed of the outcomes.

Yours sincerely,

Shivaji/Pandey  
Director

Plant Production and Protection Division

Mr Fernando Ramirez Muñoz  
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