

Joint Statement

“Women and their Contribution to the Reduction in Use of Highly Hazardous Pesticides to Ensure Food Security and Safety”

Banteay Meanchey, 27 December 2013

We, approximately 500 students, farmers and participants who are now taking part in the ‘No Pesticides Use Day’, would like to appeal and submit a Joint Statement on our concerns over the use of pesticides, especially, highly hazardous pesticides, which adversely affects human and animal health, the environment, economy, and food security to the Royal Government of Cambodia and to development partners with regard to a number of issues facing us, including imports of and trade in banned and illegal pesticides, farmers’ technical understanding of pesticides use being not compliant with safety principles. Dissemination via media of information on banned and expired pesticides has not been widespread. Moreover, Cambodian farmers have been falling into traps of increasing use of chemicals year after year, which makes them to spend more on agricultural production. Inappropriate and excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers destroys useful organisms, reduces biodiversity and causes an increase in pests, such as weeds, worms, and molds.

We would like to call upon all stakeholders to continue to support and to take part in the supervision of imports of agricultural materials, including seeds, fertilizers and pesticides as well as reduction in use of chemicals in order to maintain food security and safety. We would like to make the following suggestions and recommendations:

1. The Royal Government and Relevant Agencies

- The Royal Government of Cambodia, in particular, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, should focus more on the control of agricultural materials and ensure the safety of pesticides use.
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries should continue to encourage all Capital / provincial departments of agriculture to strengthen and expand the practice of System of Rice Intensification (SRI), Integrated Pest Management (IPM), good agricultural practice (GAP), and agricultural diversification in order to increase agricultural products and productivity.
- The Directorate General of Agriculture, in particular, the Extension Department, should continue to raise awareness on all forms of highly hazardous pesticide.
- The Department of Agricultural Legislation should continue to enforce effectively the Law on Control of Pesticides and Fertilizers as well as the Law on Seeds.
- The Directorate General of Agriculture should broaden training on safety and potential risks resulting from use of pesticides and fertilizers.
- Continue to strengthen dissemination via national radio and TV posters on hazards caused by pesticides and fertilizers and prohibit commercial advertisements of pesticides via media.
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries should urge and encourage relevant agencies to do research on effective alternatives to pesticides and fertilizers.

- The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries should urge and encourage all stakeholders to participate further in reviewing and commenting the Law on Management and Use of Agricultural Land.

2. Private Sector

- Encourage and take part in green development through ensuring good on-site environmental safety, cleansing toxic waste before disposal, etc.
- Companies importing agricultural materials, such as seeds, pesticides and fertilizers, should abide by the law by translating the instructions into Khmer and ensure high quality, in particular, stop importing or producing highly hazardous pesticides.
- Private companies should continue to support through buying and maintaining the price of organic products produced by farmers in a free market.
- Private Banks and micro-financial institutions should expand and provide agricultural credits to farmers at a lower interest rate.
- Continue to expand and increase collaboration with all stakeholders in effective implementation of the Law on Agricultural Communities.

3. Consumers

- Continue and increase support of national agricultural products or organic farming.
- Seek to understand problems caused by the effects of pesticides and fertilizers that can affect human and animal health, the environment and food.
- Continue to take part in all activities related to the prevention of and reduction in pesticides and fertilizers in communities and residential areas in order to take part in ensuring agricultural safety and sustainability.
- Take part in the establishment and organization of consumers so that they can be protected by law on the decision of product use with or free from chemicals, especially ensuring price stability and safety.

4. National and International NGOs

- Continue to actively provide comments and monitor draft laws, as well as implementation of control and use of agricultural pesticides, fertilizers, and seeds in order to ensure sustainable environment and agriculture in Cambodia.
- Continue to take part in activities to reduce use of pesticides and fertilizers, in particular, preventing imports of genetically modified seeds (GMO) and raise awareness on hazards involved in the use of chemicals.
- Continue to take part in monitoring sales, distributions, and commercial advertisements of pesticides according to international norms.
- Urge and encourage farmers' communities to continue and expand the practice of organic farming, using resources available in the area.
- Encourage the practice of System of Rice Intensification (SRI), Integrated Pesticide Management (IPM), good agricultural practice (GAP), and agricultural diversification.
- Increase support for farmers' communities in order to organize farmers' networks in selecting seeds, producing seeds, and collective purchase and sales.

- Develop human resources, coordinate provision of information on access to market and other information to farmers' communities and help seek markets for organic products.
- Conduct research and disseminate appropriate techniques to farmers to increase productivity of organic agriculture in order to take part in reducing greenhouse gas into the atmosphere.
- Expand and increase awareness-raising through media on organic farming practice to farmers' communities and the public so that they better know of the hazards and alternatives to avoid the trap of chemical use.

5. Academics

- The Royal University of Agriculture of Chamkar Daung, and other universities continue and increase research on effects of pesticides on health, environment and economy, and alternatives.
- Further study techniques of protecting crops without using pesticides and fertilizers in order to contribute to the reduction in climate change.
- Conduct research on the use of biological agents in controlling crops and methodology that can replace the use of pesticides and fertilizers.

6. Farmers

- Take part in reduction and elimination of the use of synthesized chemicals (pesticides and fertilizers).
- Increase organic farming practice (use substances readily available in communities and villages) to ensure a safe and sustainable environment.
- Together, come up with innovations appropriate for communities and villages in expanding agriculture and maintaining food safety.
- Together, eliminate the use of banned pesticides and highly hazardous pesticides.
- Increase communication and organize farmers' communities and networks to protect common interest, and share information on market and new findings.
- Apply Integrated Pest Management (IPM), such as systems of rice farming, fisheries, vegetables, raising animals, frog farming; and practices of organic farming, such as production of organic rice, and growing organic vegetables, should be encouraged.

Overall, the Kingdom of Cambodia needs development to grow, like other countries in the world. However, while seeing the benefits of development, we also need to carefully consider conservation and any adverse effects caused by pesticides and fertilizers, which is the foundation of poverty reduction. The Royal Government, and especially private companies should pay attention to and weigh carefully the balance of benefits and losses of the equilibrium of environment, health and livelihoods of farmers and Cambodians. All of us would like to call upon the Royal Government of Cambodia, relevant ministries, provincial departments, training institutions, NGOs, and all stakeholders to pay attention to monitoring and supervising all activities of private companies importing and distributing pesticides, seeds and fertilizers in order to ensure food safety and security as well as the interest of the people and the entire national society in contributing to develop the country in a sustainable manner.

For more information, please contact:

NGO Forum on Cambodia
#9-11, St 476, Toul Tumpong I, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Ms. Im Phallay, Coordinator, Environment Program

Tel: (855)-12 710 115

Email: phallay@ngoforum.org.kh

Website: www.ngoforum.org.kh