



Proposal for a Regional Pesticide Registration Scheme for the Pacific Islands

Highlights

A technical support mechanism on regional collaboration for pesticide registration is crucial and urgently needed for effective management and control of pesticides in the Pacific islands. While reliance on pesticides for agricultural production continues to increase, the national pesticide registration systems are severely under-resourced. This lack of technical expertise undermines proper risk assessment procedures to support decisions for pesticide registration.

For most Pacific Island Countries, the best and perhaps the only option to ensuring capacity to make informed decisions on pesticide registration and management is through a regional technical support mechanism that pools all available resources and expertise on pesticides. Overall, regional cooperation on pesticide registration will strengthen the ability of the national authorities to conduct more effective management and control of pesticides.



Why a Pacific Regional Pesticide Registration Scheme?

The adverse effects of pesticides on the people who use them, workers, and communities – as well as the environment – is now recognized, globally, as an issue of significant concern^a. The current trend of high reliance on pesticides for agricultural production in the Pacific islands, however, has not yet been given the level of attention it deserves by policymakers. The issue needs to be one of the highest priorities, considering that conditions of pesticide use in the Pacific islands significantly increase the risks and impacts of pesticides to human health and the fragile islands ecosystems. This is due to: lack of or poor regulatory and compliance processes, lack of staffing registration systems, very limited technical capacity, hot tropical conditions that make the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) unsuitable and the availability of a wide range of Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) in the region^b.

FAO data on pesticide import values show that the total value of the pesticide market in 9 Pacific Island Countries for which data is available (excluding PNG) is an annual average of USD\$10.6 million between 201-2014. While this value is relatively small in terms of the global market, the volumes imported are worryingly high, considering the small land areas where the pesticide products are applied, and the small size of populations who use, and are exposed to these products. Data on trends for 2011-2014 show that annual pesticide import values increased by more than 10%, and are likely continuing to increase, reflecting the increasing reliance on chemical pesticides for agricultural production in the region. While annual import trends show an increase in pesticides use, the technical capacity to make informed registration decisions on pesticides, and to manage and control their use, is very limited. The results of a recent online survey to assess the capacity for pesticide registration and management in the Pacific islands, conducted under the European Union-funded programme “Capacity Building related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements in ACP

Conditions of use are a critical consideration with regard to the risk from pesticides. The FAO-WHO International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management specifically refers to the conditions of use for pesticides when defining HHPs: “In addition, pesticides that appear to cause severe or irreversible harm to health or the environment under conditions of use in a country may be considered to be and treated as highly hazardous.” It also refers to the need for the conditions of use to be taken into account when registering pesticides.

Countries (ACP/MEAs)”, found that the technical capacity and the number of staff dedicated to pesticide registration and pesticide management at the national level is very limited. The survey also found that, as a result of this very limited capacity, full or even partial evaluation of pesticides are rarely possible. Evaluations of pesticide residues and efficacy, and risk assessments for human health or the environment are not commonly conducted, nor are they required by some national pesticide registration systems, as part of the decision-making on registration for import into the countries^c.

Benefits of the proposed Scheme

The establishment of a Pacific Regional Pesticide Registration and Management Scheme as a regional support mechanism will pool resources and technical expertise, to facilitate national decision making based on sound scientific evaluations. The regional support mechanism will also foster regional collaboration and harmonization of national systems so that: the pesticide legislative frameworks are strengthened through common procedures; technical capacity is strengthened through sharing of risk assessment methodologies and data/information management systems; and information and knowledge of alternative safer pesticide products and agro-ecological alternatives are identified and supported.

The advice provided by a regional scheme can help national authorities harmonize communication on decisions amongst themselves, as well as with international pesticide regulators and with the public. It can provide for regional cooperation in international chemical regulation treaties (Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions). It can help share information on banned pesticides, trade of illegal pesticides and identification of substandard (e.g. faulty/ineffective) products.

Overall, regional cooperation on pesticide registration and management will strengthen the ability of national authorities to conduct more effective management of pesticides, which will reduce the pesticide risks to human health and the environment, and strengthen the resilience of communities and agro-ecosystems against the impacts of climate change.

The Proposed Pacific Regional Pesticide Registration Scheme

Objective of the Scheme

The objective of the proposed Scheme is to strengthen the capacity in the Pacific region to make informed decisions on pesticide registration, through pooling of available expertise on pesticides. Well informed decision-making will result in effective and high-quality pesticide products being registered for use, as well as in a reduction of pesticide risks for human health and the environment.

Institutional setup

There are three main institutions involved in the proposed regional scheme:

- A **Pesticides Unit**, located at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), which manages the registration process and maintains the online database of national pesticide registers.
- A **Regional Pesticide Advisory Committee**, which provides advice to the participating countries on whether to approve pesticide products for registration in the Region. The Committee will administratively fall under the SPC Pesticides Unit, which provides the Secretariat to the Committee.
- **National Pesticides Registration Authorities**, which receive applications for registration and decide whether or not to register pesticide products in their country which have received a positive or negative advice for registration by the Regional Pesticide Advisory Committee.

Principles of the Scheme

- 1 Since national authorities register pesticide products, the regional scheme will evaluate pesticide products and not just pesticide active ingredients.
- 2 Applications for the registration of pesticides by the pesticide industry (e.g. importers, distributors, manufacturers) will continue to be made at the national level.
- 3 Scientific evaluation of pesti-

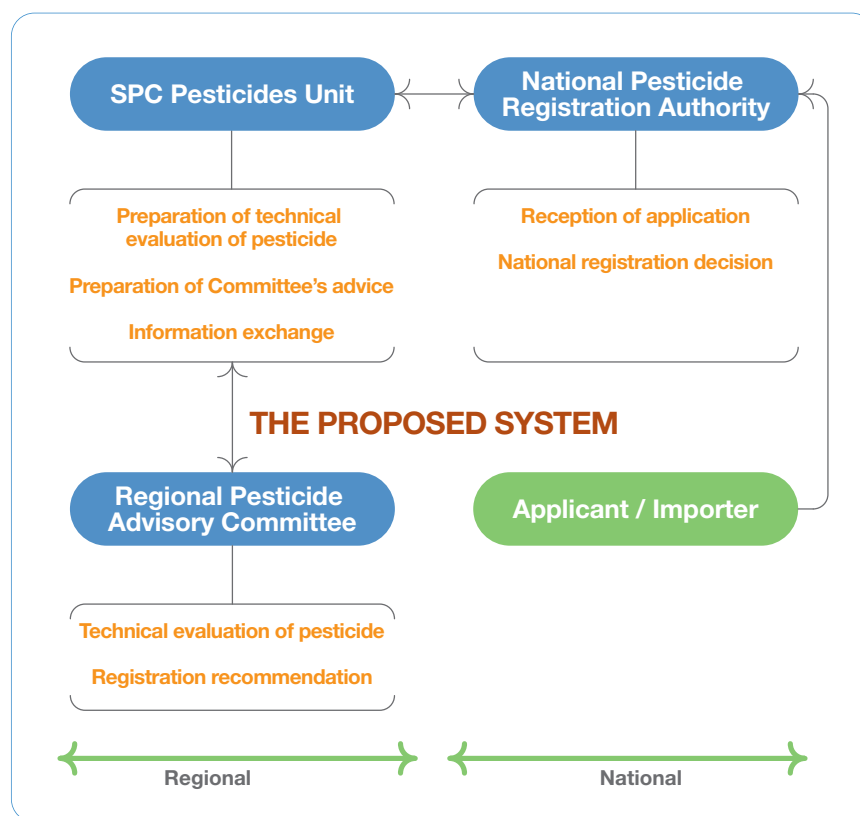
cides submitted for registration is conducted at the regional level. This evaluation is facilitated by SPC through the establishment of a Pesticides Unit and a Regional Pesticide Advisory Committee.

- 4 Respecting national sovereignty, registration decisions subsequently will continue to be made by the national authorities, based on needs for the pesticide, the outcome of the regional scientific evaluation, and local agronomic, social and environmental conditions.
- 5 Countries participating in the scheme will exchange information on the registration decisions taken.

Legal framework

The regional scheme will operate under the legal framework of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) - Pacific Regional Pesticide Registration and Management Scheme. The parties to the MOU will be:

- 1 the government ministries with responsibility for the national pesticides registration authorities which refer applications for registration of pesticide products to the scheme; and
- 2 the SPC, which will house and manage the Scheme.



Recommendations

- The increasing gap in the reliance on pesticides for agricultural production and the severely under-resourced pesticide registration systems combined with very poor conditions of use should be recognized as an issue of major concern in the region.
- The Head of Agriculture and Forestry Services (HOAFS) meeting to endorse and support the establishment of the Pacific Regional Pesticide Registration Scheme, to strengthen the capacity in the Pacific region to make informed decisions on pesticide registration and management, through pooling of available expertise on pesticides.
- The Head of Agriculture and Forestry Services (HOAFS) to support facilitate a process towards signing by their respective countries of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) - Pacific Regional Pesticide Registration and Management Scheme, the legal framework around which the Scheme will operate.
- The Secretariat of Pacific Community (SPC) to reaffirm its commitment to the establishment of a Pacific Regional Pesticide Registration Scheme through its strategic programme and as a co-signatory of the MOU.
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to reaffirm its support to the establishment of a Pacific Regional Pesticide Registration Scheme.
- The countries, FAO, SPC and all development partners to collaborate in the mobilization of technical and financial resources towards the establishment and implementation of the proposed Pacific Regional Pesticide Registration Scheme.

Note

This document is based on the work of the Working Group established to develop a full proposal for a Pacific Regional Pesticide Registration Scheme as an outcome of the regional workshop, “Human Health and Environmental Risk Assessment for Pesticides Registration in the Pacific Islands”, held in Suva, Fiji, on 26th April – 1st May, 2015^d. The tasks and composition of this Working Group was endorsed by the 8th Board Meeting of the Pacific Plant Protection Organization (PPPO), held Nadi, 21-23 September, 2015^e. In addition, the PPPO also:

- a** Recognize the importance of the proposed regional pesticide registration scheme and its potential to provide significant contribution to the strategic objectives of PPPO; and
- b** Endorse the proposed regional pesticide registration scheme to strengthen the ability of national agencies to have more effective control of pesticides.

References

- ^a Report of the International Conference on Chemicals Management on the work of its fourth session. (SAICM/ICCM.4/15).
- ^b Meriel Watts, 2016. Highly Hazardous Pesticides in the Pacific. Report by National Toxics Network, PAN Aotearoa New Zealand, and PAN Asia Pacific.
- ^c Report of the regional workshop on Workshop on Harmonization of Pesticide Registration in the Pacific Islands through a Pacific Regional Pesticide Registration Scheme, 8th 12th May, 2017
- ^d Report of the regional workshop, “Human Health and Environmental Risk Assessment for Pesticides Registration in the Pacific Islands”, Fiji, 26th April – 1st May, 2015
- ^e Report of the 8th Board Meeting of the Pacific Plant Protection Organization, September 2015



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