



Stakeholder Meeting on the Use of Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs)

Conference room, Speaker's Office, Punjab Vidhan Sabha

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Report by

Toxics Link, New Delhi



Minutes of the Meeting

Pesticides have been integral to the rise in food production across the supply chain in India. Since introducing synthetic pesticides, the agricultural sector has seen instrumental growth, with India becoming a global agricultural powerhouse. India's per capita consumption of pesticides is relatively low compared to that of other developing countries. It has further reduced in recent years, which is a very good sign from an environmental point of view. In a significant step, in September 2023, the Government of India prohibited the manufacturing, sales, and distribution of Dicofol, Dinocap, Methomyl, and Monocrotophos while also restricting the use of seven other pesticides, including Chlorpyrifos.

However, there are still concerns over the continued use of hazardous pesticides that have been phased out or being banned globally. For instance, pesticides like Mancozeb, Cyfluthrin and Zineb, which are banned in the EU, are imported from the EU and used in India. Hazardous pesticides such as Chlorpyrifos, Mancozeb, etc., registered for use in fruits and vegetables, can be bio-accumulative and persistent in the environment and thus have far-reaching consequences on human health. Some of these pesticides have been shown to directly increase the risk of cancer, endocrine disruption, diabetes, nervous system damage, etc, on prolonged exposure. This can potentially endanger the lives of exposed farmers, communities close to the contaminated environment, ecological diversity and potential consumers.

With the global consensus increasingly favouring strict pesticide regulations, Indian crops and food exports containing pesticide residues have faced significant trade barriers. Many countries have banned the import of Indian vegetables, fruits, and other food products due to these residues. Each year, numerous export consignments worth several crores are rejected due to banned chemical residues, damaging India's reputation for sustainability and responsible manufacturing practices. Punjab has particularly felt the impact; in 2022, crores worth of basmati rice export consignments were rejected due to the presence of banned pesticides like Chlorpyrifos and Tricyclazole. Considering this issue, in 2022, the Punjab Agricultural Department sought a ban on the use of 10 pesticides commonly applied to aromatic basmati rice, causing rejection. In 2023, Toxics Link suggested that farmers are unaware of the regulations and are sometimes reluctant to change due to economic setbacks.

Considering the impacts of these pesticides, many international forums, such as the Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions, have placed restrictions on the use, manufacturing, import and export of certain pesticides and are continuously expanding this list. In 2023, The Global Chemical Framework called for the phasing out of HHPs by 2035 in agriculture, where the risks have not been managed and safer, affordable alternatives are available. Simultaneously, several countries like the EU and the UK have implemented bans and strict regulations on their own on the manufacture, sale and use of pesticides. With the increased scrutiny, manufacturing and sales of hazardous pesticides have moved to developing countries like India.

India needs to recognize the concerns associated with HHPs and take necessary regulatory measures to safeguard its population, promote sustainable development goals, and ensure compliance with global standards for pesticide management.

Considering these developments, Toxics Link organized a stakeholder meeting on "The use of Highly Hazardous Pesticides in India" on 26th June 2024 in Chandigarh. This stakeholder meeting served as a crucial platform for fostering dialogue, collaboration, and action towards a more sustainable agricultural practice in India. Furthermore, it initiated a discussion on reducing the net pesticide consumption and net discharge to the environment.

The **inaugural session** of the meeting was started with the address by honourable Punjab Vidhan Sabha **Speaker Kultar Singh Sandhwan**. He said that reducing or stopping the consumption of

pesticides in Punjab has become the need of the hour as its not just harmful for pests and weeds but also impacting humans. He stressed on the need to convey the message of this deadly impact to the farmers and people at the grassroots level. Sardar Sandhwan thanked all participants and requested to take action on controlling uses of HHPs.

Mr. Satish Sinha, Associate Director Toxics Link, on his opening remarks enriched the participants on the issues of HHPs, its impact and global development on phasing out of few of these HHPs such as chlorpyrifos. He raised the concern on the availability of banned pesticides in the state and lack of state specific & country specific information on impacts of HHPs on farmers and ecological system. He highlighted that the use of globally restricted pesticides acts as trade barrier as export of agricultural products are getting rejected. Mr. Sinha thanked all participants and hoped for fruitful discussion.

Professor Ramesh Arora, SGGSW University, gave detailed presentation on the history of HHPs, its impact, global actions and need of awareness of farmers.

Mr. Gurmeet Singh Khudian, Ministry of Agriculture Punjab Assembly, said that although production increases with the use of pesticides, this phenomenon is gradually becoming a threat to human existence. Emphasizing on strictness against the use of banned pesticides, he said that the use of pesticides for the sake of more profit is a very dangerous trend. Instead, efforts should be made to get rid of it with the help of the government, self-help organizations, farmers and society. He also suggested to take help of Gurudwaras to promote organic products and campaign to reduce or stop the use of pesticides. The message needs to be conveyed to the grassroots level so that future generations can get a good environment to live.

Mr. K.A.P.Sinha, Secretary Ministry of Agriculture Punjab, informed the participants that we have all the know-how and related details on the issue and to tackle the situation stricter regulation is required. He assured that regulatory framework for pesticides is more robust. Mr. Sinha informed that total production of pesticides has reduced in the country. He agreed on the economic loss in global trade due to the use of HHPs and suggested that both central & state governments need to come up with solutions for mutual benefits (of both farmers & consumers). He informed the audience that governments are coming up with the projects & funds to strengthen R&D. Mr. Sinha stated that there is a need to create a brand for state to provide safer products.

Professor B.S. Ghuman, Former vice Chancellor, Punjabi University, suggested to organise an advisory board with all stakeholders to take action on pesticides and interlinked the issue with socio-economic sustainability. He emphasized that guidelines of using pesticides are not reaching farmers and there is need for capacity building of extensive centres so that they can work efficiently in improving the farming system. Prof Ghuman highlighted that SOPs should be developed on the proper application of HHPs, uses of protective gear, discouraging drones in applying pesticides. He suggested to develop labelling systems on the products, IECs materials on regional languages to educate farmers under CSR schemes. He also suggested to bring mechanism for environmental audit, empowerment of NGOs to create data, and to develop de-centralised committee to monitor all the systems.

Mr. Umendra Dutt, Executive Director, Kheti Virasat Mission, on his vote of thanks for the inaugural session showed his gratitude to Speaker Sardar Sandhwan for providing opportunity to organise meeting at the Vidhan Sabha. He thanked Toxics Link for organising the consultation on the topic that is a serious concern for the state. Mr. Dutt also thanked all the participants for taking out time to discuss on the issue.

Session I was enlighten with a song by a farmer on the impact of pesticides on human and environment.

Mr. Piyush Mohapatra, Sr. programme Coordinator of Toxics Link, briefed us about HHPs, their classification, production data, and associated health impacts. He also briefed the global regulatory framework on how to address the issues. He specifically highlighted the recent chemical framework that has set a target to phase out HHPs. He also stressed the need for the country to be prepared for global developments on the HHPs so that the export of farm products will not be impacted.

Dr. Jaswant Singh, Director of Agriculture Punjab, briefed about the position of state on use of HHPs. He informed the audience that banned chemicals are not produced in the state. To take care of the export rejection of basmati rice, state government has taken initiative by restricting ten pesticides including chlorpyrifos for 60 days that was further extended for 30 days. He also mentioned that banning or restricting the pesticides is under jurisdiction of Central not state so they have requested Government of India for strict regulation. Dr. Jaswant highlighted that state government regularly analyse agricultural samples and do periodic monitoring to control uses of pesticides so that farmers can be benefitted & consignment don't get rejected.

Session was continued with the talk of **Dr. Ajmer Singh Dhatt**, Director of Research, PAU Ludhiana. He informed the audience that university is promoting bio-products such as Tricoderma biofungicides. He suggested focus should be on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and discourage farmers for using red dotted broad spectrum agrochemicals. He requested state government to promote development of resistant variety so that the pesticides are not required.

Dr. Balbir Singh, Honourable Health Minister of Punjab, appreciated the efforts taken by Toxics Link and KVM in raising the issue on HHPs. He suggested his team to conduct study on the impact of HHPs both in human & animals especially endocrine disorders. Dr. Singh informed that exposure of pesticides may cause premature birth, miscarriage, and even cancer, and suggested collaboration of all concerned stakeholders to develop medical data. He also suggested PAU to regularly check water bodies for the presence of HHPs and promote canal irrigation system. He also requested agriculture minister to check subsidies given to farmers on pesticides, set the MRL, and provide subsidies to promote organic farming. Dr. Singh informed the participants about initiatives on development of pesticides free eco-park. He ensured to take actions and to create Punjab organic products hub. He also said that, this meeting should not be limited to being a onetime event, rather it should be a beginning for a series of such interactions.

Session II was focused on understanding HHP Consumption in India and its associated risk and challenges.

Second session was started with the inputs from **Dr. Subhash Verma**, HOD Entomology from YSP Horticulture University. He informed the participants that they always recommend pesticides registered by CIB-RC and tested as well as verified by the university. He suggested to strengthen extension centre to provide proper guidance and awareness to farmers & agriculture workers. Dr. Verma agreed that resistance to pesticides is growing concern. He suggested for Biointensive IPM based on pest ecology and crop diversity. He informed that in Punjab app 1.5 lakh farmers are doing natural farming based on Subhash Palekar Methodology. He also suggested to create geotag data for promoting natural farming.

Dr M S Bhullar, Director Punjab Agriculture University (PAU) Ludhiana, informed the participants that PAU organise sessions for capacity building of extension workers annually for kharif, and rabi seasons

crops as well as fruits. He also informed that all the guidelines are based upon recommendations given by CIBRC.

Ms Alka Dubey, Programme Coordinator Toxics link, had shared presentation on risk & challenges associated with chlorpyrifos. She briefed about the chemistry of chlorpyrifos, crops in which it is applied, impacts on health and the global regulations to restrict the chemical. She also informed that chlorpyrifos is a candidate POPs and once get listed as POPs under Stockholm Convention, She stressed on the need for complete phase out of Chlorpyrifos. Ms Dubey shared the finding of survey done by Toxics Link to understand the awareness among the farmers and challenge in shifting to alternatives.

The second session was enriched with the experiences of farmers on the usages of pesticides and associated impacts.

Mr. Sukhvinder Pappi informed the audience that banned pesticides are easily available in the state despite the regulations and committees to monitor the same. He mentioned that its farmers pliability to use pesticides as they unable to control pests. He said that reviving eco-system in Punjab is important for pest control and reduce pesticide use. He requested for the awareness programmes for farmers, subsidy for organic & natural farming and to include farmers in committees so that they can share the ground level problems on HHPs.

Mr. Surinder Maheshwari, pesticide dealer, shared that farmers don't prefer billing pesticides, so it become difficult to identify the products in case of some mishap or when a pesticide is banned farmers still use it and its not possible to trace the same. He suggested to promote local variety to sustain local ecology and pests. He requested to provide the alternatives at lower price to support the shifting from banned pesticides.

Similarly, thoughts were raised by Mr. Dharmjeet Singh Manvi as well.

Session III was on Alternatives and Way Forward

Mr. Manbeer Reddu, practicing natural farming, shared that awareness among farmers is very low. Although the total production of HHPs have reduced but the agrochemicals that have come into use recently are more toxic and effective in very less quantity thus reflecting the reduction in total production of the country. He suggested to understand the ecology and weeds & pests for better management.

Prof. (Dr.) Baljeet Saharan, Principal Scientist Haryana Agriculture University Hissar, highlighted on the practices of natural farming, crop diversity and applications of safer agrochemicals. He shared that universities used to recommend agrochemicals based on the guidelines by CIBRC and positive field responses. Same was echoed by **Dr. Bhupesh Gupta**, Pathologist, YSP Horticulture University and suggested for interlayer cropping to maintain ecological diversity and reducing pest infestation.

Mr. Ashish Gupta, Former member IFOAM, Gram Disha Trust, informed the participants on the need of developing country specific data on HHPs, and its impact. India currently lack such information. He also suggested to use technology wisely as farmers are using drone for HHPs application that increases air pollution, and cross contamination in organic/ natural farming.

Dr. Ashish Mittal, OHS-MCS Faridabad, shared that farmers are using empty pesticide containers for storing water & grains that cause unintentional poisoning. He suggested to monitor long-term impact of pesticides.

Dr. Rajendra Thappar, HIL(India) Limited, briefed about the strategy of the company to shifting to safer chemicals. He informed that the by mid-2025 DDT & Dicofol will be totally banned in the country. He also shared the project objectives of Fostering Agrochemicals Reduction & Management that HIL working on under the guidelines of the government.

Dr. Sukhpal Singh, Chairman, Punjab State Farmer Commission and Dr. Sohan Singh Walia, Director, School of Organic Farming, PAU also shared their views on reducing HHPs application and need of extensive awareness campaigns for farmers.

The meeting was closed with the remarks by Mr. Satish Sinha, Mr. Umendra Dutt and Speaker Sardar Sandhwan.

Mr. Sinha emphasized on the need to develop roadmap for shifting to alternatives, developing country specific data and collaborative efforts to tackle the issue. He thanked participants for the enriching sessions & fruitful discussions. He hoped for more such interactive sessions.

Sardar Sandhwan thanked participants and organisers for raising the issue. He requested concerned ministries and universities to work upon the suggestions came up during the meeting.

Mr. Umendra Dutt hoped that as the talk has started concerned stakeholders will give traction to this issue. He thanked Toxics link for organising the meeting and raising the issues. He also thanked all the participants for their time and contribution.

Outcome of the meeting

- HHPs are considered as the serious issue to act upon
- Need for an advisory board or committee including all relevant stakeholders with focus on awareness campaigns for farmers, agriculture workers, extension centres
- Labelling on agrochemical products in local language and easy to understand graphics
- Creation of data on health impact of HHPs on humans, animals and environment
- Promotion of organic farming, natural farming, IPM, multilayer cropping
- Promotion of R&D to develop safer alternatives
- Extensive monitoring of pesticidal residues

AGENDA

Stakeholder Meeting on Highly Hazardous Pesticides

Date & Time: 26th June 2024, 10.00 am to 4.00 pm

Venue: Conference Room, Speaker's Office, Punjab Vidhan Sabha, Chandigarh

Time	Session	Speakers
10:00 - 11:15	Inaugural Session Moderated by Mr. Umendra Dutt	
	Welcome address (3-5 mins)	Ms Alka Dubey, Toxics Link
	Opening Remarks	Mr Satish Sinha Associate Director, Toxics Link
	Inaugural Address	Sardar Kultar Singh Sandhwan, Honourable Speaker, Punjab Assembly
	Keynote Address	Dr. Ramesh Arora, Prof of Agriculture, SGGSWU, FGS
	Special Address	Mr. Gurmeet Singh Khuddian Agriculture Minister, Punjab
	Expert Comments	Dr. B.S. Ghuman Ex-VC, Punjabi University
	Vote of Thanks	Mr. Umendra Dutt Executive Director, Kheti Virasat Mission
11:15 – 11:30	Tea Break	
Session I- Overview of Highly Hazardous Pesticides Use in India Chaired by Dr. Balbir Singh, Health Minister, Punjab Moderated by Vidhi Mathur		
11:30- 11:45	Overview of Highly Hazardous Pesticides & Regulatory Framework	Piyush Mohapatra, Sr. Programme Coordinator, Toxics Link
11:45-11:55	Regulatory Initiative by State Government	Dr. Jaswant Singh, Director of Agriculture, Punjab
		Dr. Ajmer Singh Dhatt, Director of Research, PAU Ludhiana
11:55-12.05	Mindful Parent Citizen Perspective	Dr. Gurvinder Kaur, MCM DAV College Teaching Writing Environment Aesthetics
12:05 - 12:25	Health Perspective	Mr Gursimran Dhanoa, Farmer

		Dr. Sachin Gupta, (Oncologist and Organic Farmer) Joint Director, Max Hospital
		Dr. Arunjeet Singh PGIMER Chandigarh
		Presidential Remarks Dr. Balbir Singh, Honourable, Health Minister, Punjab
Session II – HHP Consumption in India - Risk and Challenges Moderated by Piyush Mohapatra		
12:25 - 12:35	Risks and Challenges of HHPs	Ms Alka Dubey Programme Coordinator, Toxics Link
12:35 - 12:55	Critical Challenges in Managing HHPs and Chlorpyrifos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Subhash Verma HOD, Entomology YSP Horticulture University • Dr M S Bhullar, Director, Extension, PAU, Ludhiana
		Farmer's Perspective Mr. Sukhvinder Pappi , Farmer
		Mr. Surinder Maheshwari Pesticide Dealer
12.55-13.05	Pesticide and Trade Impact	Mr Kumar Amit, IAS, MD, Punjab Agro Export Corporation
13.05 – 13:30	Discussion on HHP's impact on Agriculture, Environment and Human Health Moderated by Prof. Ramesh Arora <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary Agriculture, • Secretary Environment • Secretary Health • Capt. Vikram Bajwa, Farmer • Mr. Kanwarjeet Singh Brar • Mr. Raja Sanga 	
13:30-14:15	Lunch	
Session III- Alternatives and Way Forward Moderated by Mr. Umendra Dutt		
14:15- 14:30	Alternatives to HHP from Users' perspectives	Organic Farmers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Karan Bhuttiwala, BKU Sidhupur • Mr. Baljeet Kang
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Manbir Reddu, Farmer, Jind Haryana • Mr. Dharmjeet Singh Mavi, Farmer

14:30 – 15:10	Natural farming as an alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. (Dr.) Baljeet Saharan Principal Scientist, HAU, Hisar • Mr. Ashish Gupta, Former member IFOAM, Gram Disha Trust • Dr. Bhupesh Gupta, Pathologist, YSP Horticulture University
15:10 – 16:10	Way Forward (Panel Discussion) Moderated by Mr. Satish Sinha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Sukhpal Singh, Chairman, Punjab State Farmer Commission • Dr. Sohan Singh Walia, Director, School of Organic Farming, PAU • Dr. Rajendra Thappar, HIL • Mr. Raspinder Singh
16:10-16:20	Closing remarks by Sardar Kultar Singh Sandhwan	
16:20-16:30	TEA	